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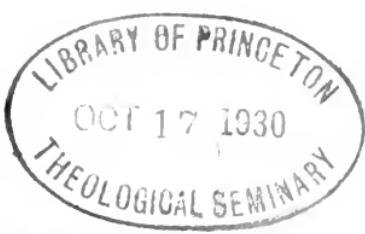












A

VINDICATION OF THE Christian Religion.

In Two PARTS.

I.

A Discourse of the *Nature* and *Use* of
MIRACLES.

II.

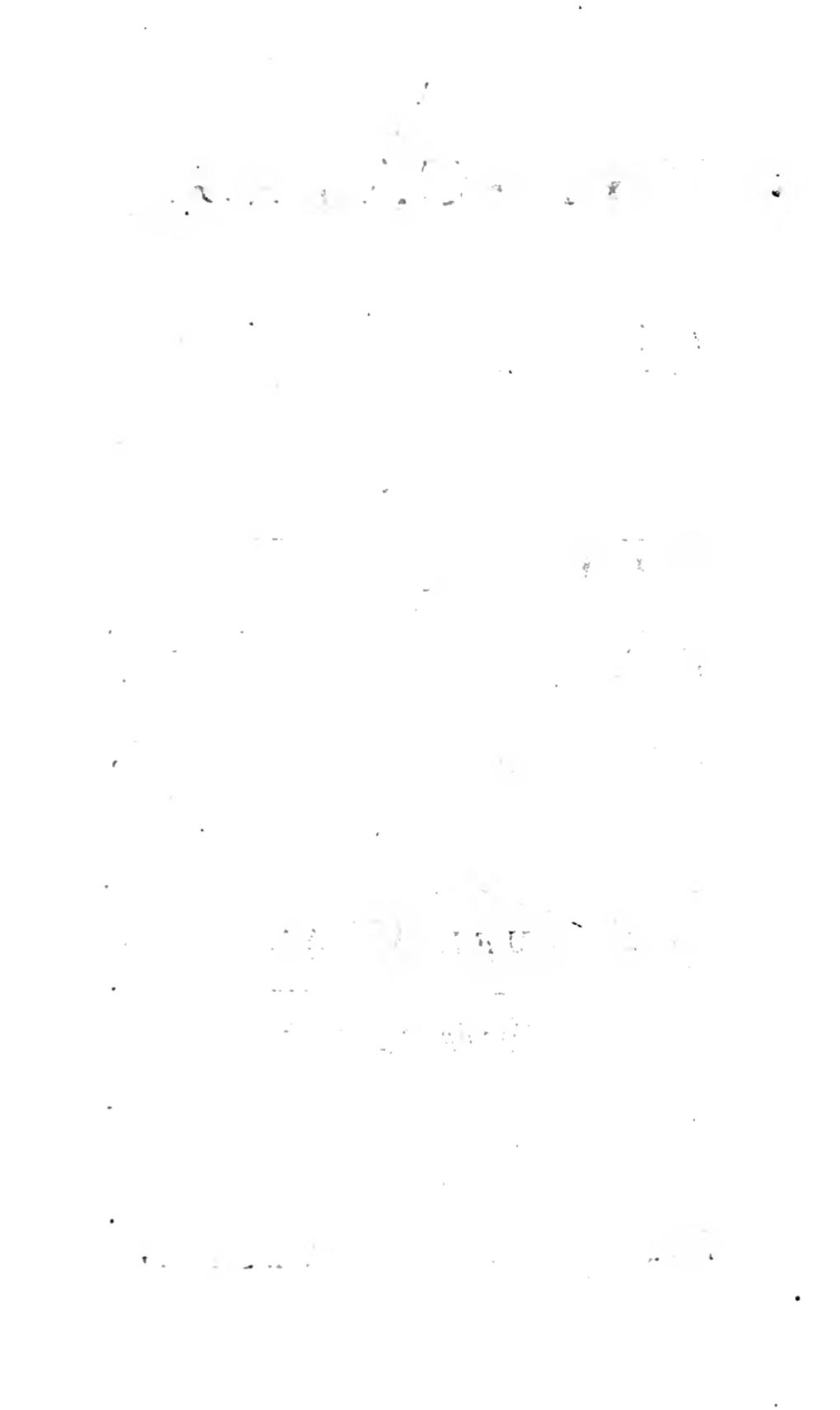
An Answer to a late Book entitled,
A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

By SAMUEL CHANDLER.

Defendat quod quisque sentit: sunt enim judicia libera.
Cicer. Tusc. Disp. I. 4.

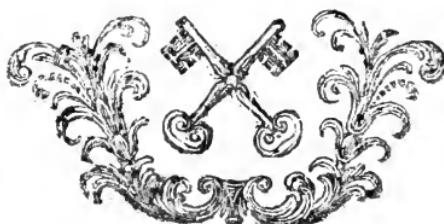
L O N D O N:

Printed for SAMUEL CHANDLER, at the
Cross-Keys in the Poultry, MDCCXXV.



A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
NATURE and USE
OF
MIRACLES.

By SAMUEL CHANDLER.



L O N D O N:
Printed in the Year, M DCC XXV.





T H E

P R E F A C E.

I T is unnecessary to acquaint the reader with the occasion of writing the following discourse of miracles, which hath laid by me finished for above two years, and would long since have been offered to the publick, had I not been drawn into some farther considerations, by the author whom I have attempted to answer in the second discourse. The expectations, which the world had raised

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from the great abilities and learning of that reverend Prelate, who hath so lately appeared in behalf of christianity, made it improper for advocates of a lower degree to shew themselves ; how much soever they might have the same good cause at heart, or be capable, in their own opinion, of defending it : And some perhaps may think, that all farther apologies for christianity, after that learned performance, are entirely needless.

Undoubtedly all who have read that valuable work, will do his Lordship the justice to own, that many of the prophecies of the Old Testament have been therein carefully examined, their sense justly stated, and their reference to the Messiah abundantly vindicated. Nor have any of the aids that learning could afford been omitted ; jewish rabbies have been made to militate in defence of christianity ; and even Virgil himself shewn to sing in the sweet strains of the gospel.

The reader will not, I hope, expect any such expence of learning in the ensuing treatise. I have not relied much on the authority of testimonies ; but have

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have endeavoured to vindicate our Saviour and his apostles, upon the plain foot of reason. It was indeed necessary, to set my argument in a clear light, to consider the sentiments of the ancient Jews, as to the Old Testament prophecies, and the reference they apprehended them to bear the Messiah; and accordingly I have allowed one short chapter, (chap. vii of the second discourse,) for that service; barely citing the places, where either Jonathan, or Onkelos, or the Hierusalem Targum, speak of the Messiah, as intended in the prophecies. And I the rather confined myself to these, because I think they prove enough, and their authority is unquestionable.

I cannot apprehend, how the Jews can ever answer the Bishop's book; it abundantly appearing, that their most ancient expositors, and celebrated Rabbies expounded many of the Old Testament prophecies, in the christian sense of them; and that, as they had their full and literal accomplishment in Jesus Christ, so they can never be shewn to have had their accomplishment in any

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one else. And therefore as far as this controversy relates to the Jews, his Lordship hath left no room for any farther additions, and his work is justly to be esteemed, as an unanswerable defence of christianity against their exceptions.

The second of these treatises, in answer to the Grounds and Reasons, &c. hath a more extensive view; and is designed, not barely to obviate the objections of our jewish adversaries, but to set the conduct of our Saviour and his apostles in such a light, as may appear rational to every impartial and considerate mind. I need not acquaint the reader, that this part was near finished, before ever the Bishop's book was promised. The different method I have made use of, the many incidental objections I have considered, omitted by his Lordship, as not necessary to his argument, and the different interpretations I have given of particular passages of Scripture, will abundantly clear me from the imputation of having built upon his Lordship's foundation; tho' whether my foundation be equally firm,

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is left to the judgment of those who will be at the pains to examine it. One thing I can, with all sincerity affirm, that my principal motive to this undertaking, was the just value I had for christianity my self, and a desire to vindicate it from the objections of others. If my zeal hath exceeded my knowledge, I shall not be the first instance of this kind; and so shall hope to be as kindly forgotten, as other small authors, who have gone before me.

The preface to the discourse of the Grounds and Reasons is, in my judgment, an excellent defence of that liberty of every one's judging for himself, and of proposing his opinions to others, and of defending them with the best reasons he can, which every one hath a right to, as a man and a christian. If we have a right to think at all, we must have a right to judge for ourselves; because no one, who uses himself to thought and enquiry, can judge any otherwise, than as he is convinced of the truth or falsehood of things; and of consequence we have as certainly a natural right to communicate

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municate our Ideas to others, and propagate what we apprehend to be the truth, by all the Methods of fair reasoning and argument, as we have to society and converse with others ; which can only be maintained by a mutual communication of sentiments, i. e. by speaking our own real opinions, and receiving the knowledge of those of others. And it is methinks so far from being any fault in the present administration, that all men are suffered openly to maintain and propagate their opinions, that we must, in justice, as well as gratitude to his majesty, publish it to the world, that it is against his majesty's will, that tyranny of either kind, civil or ecclesiastical, keeps, or gains ground ; and all honest and impartial minds have this to comfort them, that as his majesty is the great assertor of the rights of conscience abroad, so they are secure of his royal protection and countenance in the enjoyment of them at home.

Matters of speculation and practice are so vastly different in themselves, as that they cannot well be confounded,

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but either by weak or designing men; and therefore, tho' the judges and civil magistrates have a right, by all proper means and endeavours, suitable to their respective stations, to controul the spirit of libertinism, i. e. to keep men from violating the publick peace, and to punish them if they do; yet it cannot be argued from hence, that they have a like power, as magistrates, and by the same methods, to controul the spirit of infidelity too, i. e. to punish them for being unbelievers, or for telling the reasons of their infidelity to others: because infidelity may be where there is no immorality; and because some persons may possibly think that all who differ from them are infidels, and so immoral, and therefore liable to the censure of the civil magistrate; and because the effects of infidelity and libertinism, and their influence upon societies, are entirely different; and the methods proper to prevent the one hath not the least tendency in the world to controul, and hinder the spreading of the other. And 'till it can be proved, that the sentiments of mens minds are

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as properly subject to the magistrates power, as such, as their external behaviour, that immorality and difference in opinion from others, are entirely the same, and that both may be equally cured by the very same means; it will follow, that tho' the magistrates sword may very fitly be employed to prevent libertinism, or the breach of the publick peace by mens vices, yet that the progress of infidelity must be controuled another way, viz. by convincing mens consciences of the truth of christianity, and fairly answering their objections against it.

'Tis not surprising that men, who take their religion upon trust, and who therefore can know but little of the intrinsick worth of christianity, or of that strong evidence that there is to support it, should be in pain for it, when they find it attacked by any new objections, or old ones placed in a somewhat different view from what they were before; or that they should call out aloud to the magistrate to prevent the making of them, because they know not how otherwise to answer them. But that men of learning and great abilities, whose pro-

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per office 'tis to defend christianity, by giving the reasons for their faith, and who seem to have both ability and leisure thus to stand up in the behalf of it, should make their appeal to the civil power, and become humble suitors to the magistrate to controul the spirit of infidelity, is strangely surprizing. It looks as if they suspected the strength of christianity ; otherwise, one would think, they would not invite such strange and foreign aids to their assistance, when they could have more friendly ones nearer at home, that would much more effectually support and protect it ; or at least, as tho' they had some other interest to maintain than the cause of common christianity, tho' at the same time they would willingly be thought to have nothing else in view, but the service and honour of it. If the scheme of our modern deists be founded in truth, I cannot help wishing it all good success ; and it would be a crime in the civil magistrate, by any methods of violence, to prevent the progress of it : But if, as I believe, christianity is the cause of God, it will prevail by its own native

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native excellence, and of consequence needs not the assistance of the civil power. It once triumphed in its amazing success, when the powers of this world were bent upon its extirpation; and if they would be but content to believe for themselves only, and stand neuter between the contending parties; only preserving them from offering violence to one another, I should not be in the least afraid of the most formidable objections, that any of its adversaries can bring against the christian revelation. Yea on the contrary, I am perswaded that nothing could be of greater service to christianity, than to suffer, and even invite the enemies of it to speak out their difficulties with freedom; for by being thus fairly proposed, they might be as impartially considered, and solidly answered; whereby those who believe already would be more confirmed in the faith they have received, and others, who are now unbelievers, might be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus; things indefensible would be given up; the spirit of charity would grow more warm and diffusive;

diffusive; men would become christians, not merely thro' education and custom, but upon solid reasons and firm conviction; and of consequence the influence of christianity, would probably be much more strong and effectual upon the consciences and lives of its professors.

On the other hand, where *inquisitive* men are afraid of speaking out their minds, least they should expose themselves to the displeasure of the civil power, they will be incapable of receiving the satisfaction, which others, if they knew their difficulties, might probably give them; and so will think them *unanswerable*, because they dare not publish them. Hence they necessarily remain *unbelievers*; spread privately, and therefore more effectually, disadvantageous reports of christianity; and because they are denied the liberty of reasoning freely, give themselves the greater liberty of *invective*; and, I am perswaded, do themselves and others much more hurt, by *fly insinuations*, odious comparisons, covert yet bitter reflections, and false representations, than they could possibly do, by a fair open candid proposing their objections,

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to the consideration of wise and impartial men. The author before us seems to be a proof of the truth of what I have been asserting. I can scarce perswade my self to think so very ill of him, as that he fell into this way of writing out of choice; or that he would have made use of so much ridicule and banter, and, under the guise of friendship, have attacked christianity with so much scorn and contempt, could he have been assured, that he might have acted the part of a more open and generous adversary, with safety to himself. We might then have seen his strongest objections, from the application of the Old Testament prophecies, stated in a fairer light; he would have written with more temper, decency, and good manners; and his answerers might have replied with equal strength and success, without the ungrateful task of making some reflections, which now appear unavoidable and necessary.

I would not be understood however, as tho' I was pleading for a liberty, publickly to revile, and calumniate christianity; or indeed any established religion whatsoever.

whatsoever. This is little less than a breach of the publick order and peace, and the persons who allow themselves this liberty, cannot plead necessity or conscience in their defence. If every one hath a right to judge for himself, no man can have a right to insult, revile, and reproach another for differing from him; and 'tis part of the magistrate's office, to prevent injuries of all sorts from being offered to the subject; and to protect every one in the possession of his respective privileges. But that men should propose their difficulties openly and fairly, in order to a friendly impartial debate, is, I humbly apprehend, necessary to support the cause of truth in general, and the credit and honour of christianity in particular.

I cannot however, but greatly wonder at the mighty zeal, that hath lately appeared in some gentlemen to run down christianity, and to represent it as an idle and groundless institution. That men of immoral profligate lives should endeavour to perswade themselves that the religion of the gospel is a cheat, is not at all surprizing; because

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they have nothing to hope for, but every thing that is bad to fear, should it happen to be true. But that such, who would be thought friends to the interests of mankind, and lovers of virtue and goodness, should, with so much zeal and warmth oppose, and endeavour to subvert a religion, that evidently maintains, and is built upon these principles, I know not how, by any just maxims whatsoever, to account for. Surely it will be owned, that there are a great many wise precepts, and excellent principles in the christian scheme; and therefore when they argue against it, it should be with an exception to those things that are confessedly agreeable to truth and reason; they ought only to expose the impostures, frauds, false principles, the idle and destructive maxims, the false reasonings and comparisons that are to be found in it, if any such they can produce. And here we are willing to joyn issue with them. If they can fairly prove the principles we maintain to be false, we own we must reject them; and if they can prove these to be the principles of the gospel, we must be forced

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forced farther to give up its divine original. But doth it therefore follow, that supposing the gospel was no revelation from God, it hath nothing in it true or valuable? And would not a wise and good man, that hath any just sense of honour, or value for the interests of virtue, own and commend what was commendable in christianity; and be content with exposing the absurdities that do attend it, without condemning in the lump, without any difference or exceptions, the excellencies and faults of it? And will not those who read these gentlemens writings, in which there are no footsteps of such a necessary distinction to be found, conclude them enemies to the whole of christianity, tho' they wou'd be thought so only to some particular parts of it? And if they were not so, woul'd they employ all their zeal and time in endeavouring to unsettle mens minds, without so much as attempting to lay down any more solid and substantial rules to lead men into virtue and happiness? What tho' Cicero and Seneca, and other men amongst the Heathens, were free-thinkers,

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thinkers, and had no great opinion of the religion of their own country, were they enemies to virtue and morality too? Did they not endeavour to establish, those great principles of the being of a God, and his providence and a future State? And did they not recommend the worship of the supreme being, and the practice of universal virtue? Did they, like our modern deists, confound all good and evil, and argue indifferently against them both? Fair, I perceive, they could be thought like these great men; but they must be content to be without this great honour, 'till they better understand their principles, and learn from them to write with a more sincere regard to truth and virtue.

If the enemies to religion and christianity would do any thing to the purpose, let them disprove the being of a God, and his providence, and the necessary distinction and difference between moral good and evil. If they profess to own and believe these things, let them shew that men are not accountable for their actions, or that if they are accountable, they are reward-

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ed and punished in the present life, and that therefore there is no need of a future reckoning. If they own there is, let them shew that the method laid down in the gospel, of God's pardoning guilty sinners, is absurd and unsuitable to his nature and perfections. Let them lay down any more probable and likely scheme, that shall be liable to less difficulties. Let them prove that repentance must necessarily be entitled to pardon; that God cannot have any wise and valuable ends to answer by the punishment of sinful men in another life; that the resurrection of the body is impossible; that the soul can subsist in a state of compleat happiness without any union to body; that Jesus Christ was no prophet, that his death and sufferings was not a proper method to spread the knowledge of God, and encourage the practice of true religion. In a word let them prove that religion in general is a groundless idle thing, or that the grand principles of the christian religion are absurd and false; or their method of writing against christianity will appear to every serious

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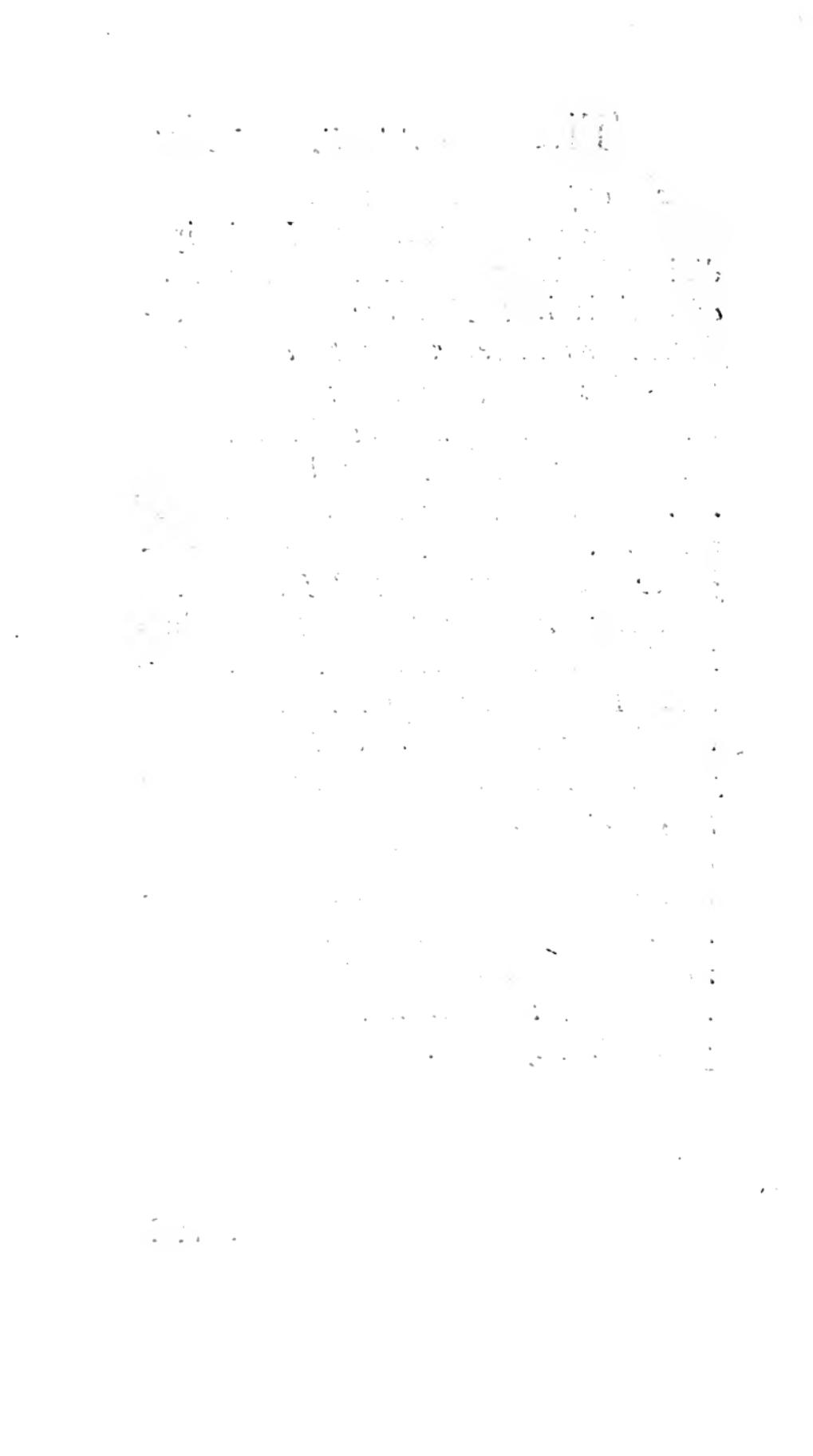
serious mind to be indefensible and highly criminal.

Not to mention here, that they do not seem so much to argue against christianity, as to insult and banter it. The author of the Grounds, when he should have been more seriously employed, makes himself merry with his Rabbi and his Devil, and represents St. Paul as talking divine nonsense, in a beautiful allegory he did not understand. And when satyr fails him, meanly stoops to methods of scandal, by making odious comparisons, and evidently false assertions. His friend the Moderator speaks out his mind more freely, and openly denies what this other author falsely and treacherously professes to defend. He hath found out that the resurrection of Christ is an old woman's fable, and that the apostles had some interest to serve by defending and propagating the imposture, and that the miracles of Christ were— such ridiculous stories he had not patience to mention them. These are plain assertious indeed, and the true turning points of the controversy. But would one not have

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have expected that these assertions should have been proved? Is his ipse dixit a sufficient confutation of the facts of christianity? And are not such assertions as these, without any proofs to confirm them, an argument that he wishes christianity may be false, tho' he is not able to prove it so? I am exceedingly surprized, that in a controversy of this sort, so much ill nature and prejudice should appear; tho' I am at the same time as truly pleased to see christianity thus thro'ly canvassed and examined. I wish that both the friends and enemies of it would be content to argue fairly, without any reflections on either side, not well supported and proved; then we might hope to see some happy issue of the debate; and if the following discourses shall have any influence to promote the cause of truth and virtue, 'tis all I expect or desire from the publication of them.

T H E





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A

DISCOURSE O F MIRACLES.

The INTRODUCTION.

HE R E is no one proposition in nature more certainly to be demonstrated, than the existence of an eternal, infinitely wise, and powerful cause, to whom all other beings owe their existence, and on whom they are entirely dependent. And, as it would not have been consistent with the most perfect wisdom, to have given being to creatures without some valuable end and design, we may justly reason farther, that as he made them originally, he still continues to over-rule

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and govern them, in such a manner as most effectually tends to answer the original design of their creation. And as the natures, capacities and powers of the several beings, that God hath made, are vastly different, some having vouchsafed to them faculties and abilities greatly superior to what others are possessed of; it follows, that there must also be a suitable difference in the methods of divine providence, or in the manner by which God is pleased to over-rule and govern them. From such of his creatures, who are destitute of reason, as they cannot perform, so he cannot expect a reasonable service; whilst as for those who have this excellent gift communicated to them, as they are capable of understanding the nature and obligation of laws, so it is reasonable to think, that the great Author of their beings intended to govern them by proper laws, and to reward or punish them, according as they should observe, or violate them.

That mankind are capable of government by proper laws, will not, I believe, be disputed. The more difficult enquiry is, What these laws are, and by what means

we attain to the knowledge of them. And, I think, it must be own'd, either that our natural powers, and reasonable faculties are absolutely sufficient of themselves, without any farther help, to lead us into those just and becoming sentiments of God, and that knowledge of the duties we stand obliged to the performance of, which is necessary to encourage and direct our obedience: Or else if human reason should, all circumstances consider'd, be found highly insufficient to answer this great end, that then some information from God himself is necessary, in order to instruct men what the obedience he requires is, and what the recompence they may expect in performing it.

And that God should vouchsafe to make some revelation of himself, and will to his creatures, is a supposition much more reasonable in itself, and suitable to the character he bares, of an infinitely perfect being, than that he should send them into the world, and leave them to wander in perpetual uncertainty, both with respect to their behaviour in the present life, and their expectations as to another.

If such a revelation is made, it must either be to every individual, or else to some particular persons, who, receiving full instructions from God, and coming in his name, and with proper credentials of their divine mission, may have ability and authority to instruct others. To suppose it necessary that God should immediately reveal himself to every individual person, is to suppose it necessary that God should always act by extraordinary methods, when the more common and ordinary would be abundantly sufficient, and would be an overbearing the reasonable powers and faculties of men, without giving them any opportunity for the proper exercise, and improvement of them. As therefore it seems more reasonable to think, that God would select from among the children of men some particular persons, and favour them with special instructions, in order to qualify them to be his messengers to the rest of the world ; so nothing is more certain, than that such persons, who are sent by him, must come with proper evidence and proofs of their mission from him ; otherwise there could be no obligation upon any to receive and submit to them. And as miracles have been

been generally looked on to be proper testimonials of a persons divine authority, and many have laid a very great stress on them, whilst some few have questioned their possibility, and denied them to be of any use in matters of religion, I the more easily persuaded myself to examine, with some care, into the nature of miracles, and how far they are a proof of a divine mission and authority, in him that would support such a claim by virtue of them.





C H A P. I.

Of the nature of Miracles.

BY a miracle is generally understood something very extraordinary and surprising; some visible effect above, or contrary to the common course, and laws of nature. A definition more popular than exact; because the same action may be contrary to the common laws of nature, when performed by one agent, that is very reconcileable with, and agreeable to those laws, when done by another; and therefore may be either miraculous, or not, according to the different circumstances, and capacities of the agent: Or the common laws of nature may be, in many instances, changed and varied from, and yet there be no miracle in the case, *viz.* when the effect produced is but answerable to the power of him that produces it.

Mr. Lock

Mr. *Lock** defines a miracle, to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine.

But that this account cannot be just is evident, from what this great man afterwards says, viz. *That 'tis agreed that a miracle must be that, which surpasses the force of nature, in the established steady laws of causes and effects.* Doth it not hence follow, That a miracle must be somewhat, not which is only judged to exceed, or surpass, but which actually doth surpass these laws? Indeed Mr. *Lock* seems to have been aware, that this definition would be liable to some strong objections, which, I think, he hath not sufficiently removed. Particularly a miracle is hereby made to depend entirely on the opinion of the spectator. It receives, according to him, its being, not from the nature of the operation performed, or the power of the agent, but from the judgment passed on it by the beholder; which, in short, is to define a miracle to be nothing else, but the fiction of an idle,

* Vol. iii. p. 451. *Ibid.*

or credulous imagination. According to this notion, that which is really a miracle, or the most extraordinary, and supernatural work, may possibly be none at all, *viz.* if the spectator should not happen to think it so : And thus our Saviour's most wonderful actions were miracles, or not, and sometimes both at once, according to the different judgments passed on them, by those who saw them. And on the other hand, that which hath nothing of the nature of a miracle in it, may yet become a real one *viz.* if the performer can find any persons, weak and superstitious enough to think it so ; and thus the impostures, and craft of the worst of men, may become divine works, and proper testimonials of a divine mission and authority. This I apprehend is the certain consequence of this definition, which is in reality to define it into quite nothing at all. Whereas a miracle, according to the meaning of the sacred writings, is somewhat real ; somewhat out of the common and ordinary course of nature, whatever be the opinion and judgment of the spectator concerning it. This makes no alteration in the nature of the action,

or

or in the power by which it is performed.

I thought it the more necessary, to take notice of this definition, because of the great authority and weight, which Mr. *Lock* supposes every miracle necessarily to carry with it, viz. *That every miracle is a divine attestation to every person that pretends to a divine mission ; * or that whosoever comes with, or professes to come with a message from God, cannot be refused belief, if he vouches his mission by miracles, because his credentials have a right to it ; and again † that it carries an obligation upon him that believes the miracle, to believe in and submit to every such pretender to revelation.* If indeed any person, pretending to a divine mission, doth an action, which appears so wonderful, as that any of the spectators look upon it as divine, or performed by the immediate interposition of God's power, such persons undoubtedly, whilst under this persuasion, must look upon him that performs the work, as acting by a divine influence, and upon them-

* p. 452, † 453.

selves as under obligations to receive him as a divine messenger; and in this sense, *that will be a miracle to one, which is not so to another,* * i. e. one person may think that to be a miracle, which another knows to be none at all. But doth it therefore follow that there are no certain criteria, by which to distinguish real miracles from supposed ones? Or that every such action, supposed by some persons to be divine, is really a divine attestation? If the miracle lies in the opinion of the spectator, 'tis possible that the action, he accounts miraculous, may be done without any divine interposition, and therefore can never be in itself any testimony or witness from God. Weak and credulous persons may think the surprising tricks of juglers to be miraculous, as some thought concerning the works of *Simon Magus*, and as was really the case with many of *Mahomet's* disciples. But must it therefore be said that God bare witness to *Simon* and *Mahomet*, and supported the pretensions of those two impostors by his own testimony? No. The spectator's persuasion, whether right or wrong,

* Page 451.

must be the rule of his own actions, but can never make that miraculous, which in its own nature is not so ; nor change the frauds of wicked men into a divine testimony.

If indeed such an account of miracles was true, there seems to be an obligation laid upon mankind, at least, I am afraid, upon the generality of men, to submit to every artful deceiver, that hath cunning enough to do things, they may not be able to account for ; and wickedness enough to vend them for miracles, in order to establish a false character, and usurped authority. I hope I have not in this matter misunderstood, or misrepresented Mr. *Lock*. If I can be convinced I have, I shall be willing to do publick justice to so great a man, by freely owning my mistake.

Others define a miracle to be *an extraordinary operation, above the power of all created beings, and performable by God alone*. But this also is liable to just exceptions. For in the first place, 'tis not necessary, that the thing performed should be above the power of every creature to do, in order to its being truly miraculous.

Nor,

Nor, secondly, will it be easy to prove, that many of those things, which the scriptures call, and account miracles, are above the power of every creature to do, and performable by God only ; because it will be difficult to ascertain and fix how far the abilities of created natures, superior to us, may reach, and no farther. Besides that the scriptures do expressly attribute miracles to created beings, inferior in power and wisdom to God. Thus we read, that the wicked one, spoken of by the apostle, *2 Thess. ii. 9.* should come *ἐν πάσῃ διωκείᾳ καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν* with all miracles signs and wonders, according as these very words are translated, *Heb. ii. 4.* where the apostle tells us, that God bare witness to the truth of christianity *σημείοις τέρασι καὶ πονηροῖς διωκέσσι* with signs and wonders, and divers miracles. And yet 'tis expressly said, in the former place, of the man of sin, that *his coming* with these miracles, signs and wonders, should be *κατ' ἐργάτειαν τῆς Σατανᾶ*, after the working of Satan, or in the power, and with the assistance of the Devil. And whereas 'tis said he should come with *lying wonders*, the meaning is not that his miracles

racles should be sham and counterfeit, but that they should be wrought in opposition to christianity, and of consequence in confirmation of a lye ; as it expressly follows, v. 11. *For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.* And our blessed Lord himself, told his disciples that, after his being taken from them, *false prophets and false christians should arise, and shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect,* Matth. xxiv. 24. or almost prevail with his very apostles to believe them. And, in the Old Testament, God himself supposes, that a *false prophet might arise, and give signs and wonders,* in confirmation of his pretensions to a prophetick mission and authority ; and warns the *Israelites* not to regard or follow their instructions, Deut. xiii. 1. 3. So that the scriptures suppose, that miracles may be done by Satan and his instruments, in confirmation of false pretensions to a prophetick mission and authority ; and accordingly caution us against being deceived thereby.

In order to think distinctly and justly on this subject, I apprehend it will be
neces-

necessary to consider, that as there are different orders and ranks of beings in the creation, so they are endowed with as different powers and faculties: Some fitted for more extraordinary operations than others, capable of exerting themselves with greater force and efficacy, and of performing things which, to beings of an inferior station and ability, would be absolutely impossible. Now whilst any beings act only in a manner suited to their proper capacities and powers, and perform things for which they really have a natural ability, in such actions, tho' never so uncommon and extraordinary, there can be nothing more of wonder or miracle, than in any other instance, where the effect is but adequate, or answerable to its cause. For instance, that men should reason, distinguish between good and evil, apprehend the relations and differences of things, measure the distances, compute the magnitudes, understand the motions of the heavenly bodies, and foretell the consequences of such particular motions, is nothing strange or surprising; because they have natural powers and faculties that do enable them for such operations; and there is nothing more necessa-

ry to such attainments, than a just and careful exercise and employment of the capacities they are possessed of. But on the contrary, if stones should reason well, and brutes come to have the faculty of speech, and trees to walk and act as men, this would justly be accounted miraculous, and the effect of some supernatural operation; because these things are certainly known to be above the reach of the powers and faculties of their respective natures, and there is nothing in them that can be the proper causes of such effects. Thus also for the same reason, if a man should stop the sun in his course, calm the winds and waves, create bread for the hungry, restore limbs to the maimed, sight to the blind, and health and ease to the diseased and pained, by his mere word and command, these things being manifestly and certainly above the reach of all the powers of human nature, must be allowed to be truly miraculous in the man that doth them: I say *in the man that doth them;* because these very instances would be no matter of just wonder or miracle at all, if they were visibly performed by superior beings, of powers and faculties capable of such opera-

operations ; no more miraculous, than that the effect should be answerable to its cause ; or that God himself, to whom all power belongs, should be able to bring such events to pass, which are above the power of all created beings whatsoever.

Hence I think a miracle in general should be defined, *An action done, or an operation visibly performed by any being, that is really and truly above the reach, natural power and capacity of that being who doth it, of himself, and without the assistance of some superior agent, to perform.* And therefore a miracle, when spoken of as done by a man, in confirmation of a divine mission, *is somewhat visibly performed by him, in order to prove himself to be sent of God, that is strictly and truly above all his natural powers and capacities ; and which he could not of himself perform, without the influence and assistance of some superior agent.* Speech is a faculty natural to man ; but that a stone should speak is as truly a miracle as that a man should fly. That a man should command the winds and waves into submission and silence, or stop the course of the heavenly bodies, is as real a mi-

a miracle, as that he should, by his word, create the world out of nothing. But should an angel visibly perform these things, we might indeed be surprized at so unexpected an event ; but could not, according to the foregoing account, determine it to be a miracle, till we could prove the operation to be beyond the power and ability of the performer.

Hence it follows, that the same action may be a miracle, or not, according as it is performed by an agent of inferior, or superior abilities ; as in the already mentioned instance. Should the sun stop, or change his motion, at the word or command of a mere man, this would be a proper miracle, because above the reach of all the powers of human nature : But should some superior agent arrest the sun , and hold him fixed and immovable , or cause him to run a quite different course from what he now doth, it would be no more a miracle, supposing his power equal to such a work, than for a man to hold a bowl in his hand, or throw it *East* or *West*, just as it suited his purpose or inclination.

Hence also it follows, that no beings whatsoever can ; of themselves, perform real mi-

racles. Men may do miracles by the assistance of angels, and angels by the assistance of some superior powers, and these again under the special influence of Almighty God : *i. e.* With such assistance they may bring to pass events, which otherwise they could never have done. But that they cannot of themselves do proper miracles, according to the account I have given of them, is as evident, as that they cannot perform impossibilities. Even the actions of God himself will not, upon this scheme, be miraculous ; because he can act by the assistance of no being superior to himself, being the first and greatest of all beings ; and because nothing, that is an object of power, can be impossible to him, *to whom all power belongs.*

So that what is, or what is not a miracle, is to be determined, not by the extraordinariness of the work, or the opinion of the spectator ; but by the agreement and proportion between the action performed, and the capacities, and powers of the agent. If the action done be certainly above all the powers of the agent, of himself, and unassisted, to perform, it is a true and proper miracle ; and proves all that a miracle can, or need to prove, *viz.* the co operation and

and assistance of some invisible and superior being ; as shall afterwards be more fully shewn.

Upon this scheme we need not spend many words to prove the possibility of miracles. 'Tis but to suppose, what I apprehend few will deny, that there are other beings existing, superior to us, by whose assistance and influence we may be enabled to do things, that otherwise we could not do : At least 'tis but supposing such a power in God, to act upon, and influence the creatures he hath made ; and I believe it will appear, that there remains no farther difficulties about miracles, from the impossibility of them.

'Tis a much more material objection that may be raised against the matter, as I have now stated it, that even this account leaves us at a loss how to determine, when any thing is a proper miracle, or not ; because we know not all the powers of human nature, and therefore cannot pass a safe judgment, as to many things, whether they are within, or beyond its reach.

But even to this it may be answer'd, that there is not really so much difficulty in this matter, as some may imagine. Most

persons seem to be competent judges in the case ; and it requires no tedious study, or intricate reasoning to understand, generally speaking, the powers of human nature.

It seems indeed to be a much easier matter to judge what things are, or are not within the power of men to effect, than to determine how far human knowledge may extend. Our minds are of noble capacities, and able to search out many of the most difficult truths. 'Tis the proper province of the soul to reason and judge ; to consider the relations and differences of things ; and to draw from certain premises their natural and necessary consequences. And therefore whatever degrees of knowledge we gain, from observation, experience, and reason ; from conversing with books, or studying the arts and sciences, this is plainly to be accounted for : Our natural powers and faculties render us capable of such improvements. And therefore whatever events are foretold, that depend on certain laws, clearly understood, and plainly to be demonstrated ; or whatever experiments we can make, in consequence of foregoing principles, justly stated, and evidently proved,

proved , these will have nothing of the nature of miracles in them, however unaccountable they may appear to persons, who know not those certain and regular laws, according to which they proceed. And indeed, till we can certainly determine the measure and capacity of our reasonable powers, we cannot bound the extent of human knowledge, nor fix those limits, beyond which the understandings of men cannot reach. However,

Should an ignorant unlearned person, bred up from his infancy to the most servile employments, whose mind had never once been improved by reading or reflection, in an instant become able to solve the most intricate problems, to understand and demonstrate the most difficult mathematical propositions, that have been the labour and search of many years ; and in a moment grow wiser than those great men, whose improvements have been the reward of tedious application, and of long and painful study ; this, as it could not be accounted for, from any of the known faculties of our minds, must necessarily be esteemed as the effect of some supernatural agency and influence.

And as to external operations, I am persuaded, that, to careful inquisitive persons, it will be still a less difficult matter to determine, what things are, and what things are not, within the reach of human power. We find by constant experience, that we can move the members of our own bodies, and put our selves into various shapes, postures, and places ; that we can raise new ideas in the minds of others by action and converse ; that by *contact* we can alter the position, retard or quicken the motion, change the situation of the parts of matter, in proportion, as the power of the agent is superior to the resistance of the body wrought on. These things proceed according to certain fixed laws, of nature's establishing ; and therefore have nothing of real miracle or wonder in them.

But now let any man try if he can supercede or change these laws of nature ; if he can give solidity and firmness to the water to support him ; if he can so purify and spiritualize his body, as that the air shall bare him ; if he can raise new ideas in the minds of others by a meer turn of thought ; if he can operate on distant bodies by an act of his will ; and overcome a superior resistance

resistance by a lesser; and the consequence will soon discover the vanity of the attempt, and shew, at least, to what things human power cannot possibly extend.

'Tis true, that the capacities of some men are much nobler than those of others; their knowledge vastly greater, and their powers of acting proportionably more extensive. And therefore it may be farther said, that we are not proper judges of others, and cannot determine how far the powers of human nature may reach, and no farther, because we know what we can, and what we cannot do our selves: At least, that the generality of men are very incompetent judges in this case; who, having never made any just enquiries into the extent of their own powers, will be often in danger of taking that, which is surprizing to them, because uncommon, for what is truly miraculous.

Thus for instance: Possibly there may be some barbarous nations, who, being altogether unacquainted with the laws and motions of the heavenly bodies, might judge it a thing absolutely impossible, to determine the exact time of eclipses; and be ready to account any person under a pro-

phetick miraculous inspiration, that should come amongst them, and exactly fix the time of such appearances. Another perhaps, by flight of hand, by the application of some unknown medium, or by some secret art and contrivance, might effect many surprizing and unusual things; which, by ignorant and unlearn'd persons, that knew not how better to account for them, might be deemed miraculous, and imputed to the operation of some invisible power. What guard have such persons against the delusion of such impostures: Or what marks whereby to distinguish them from real miracles?

I answer, that whatever is surprizing is not therefore immediately to be accounted a miracle; nor any man to be esteemed as under a supernatural information, meerly for the sake of being wiser than others. Things predicted can never be arguments of any person's acting under the influence of a superior power, till the events foretold are come to pass; nor then, if those things depended on a train of certain and necessary causes, which, for ought we know, the relater might understand; or which there were many probabilities to induce him to believe would, some time or other, come to pass: And therefore

fore there are but few cases, wherein the meer foretelling things to come ought to be immediately allowed miraculous, or the person predicting them owned, as one acting under some invisible influence or inspiration.

And as for those surprizing things, that may be sometimes performed by cheats and cunning juglers, by chymists or mathematicians, from an extraordinary skill in the powers of nature, there will be less reason for any to account them miraculous, and therefore less danger of their being imposed on by them. For there will be many circumstances attending them, to be observed by a cautious spectator, that will discover the slight of hand by which they are performed, and give a strong presumption of the fraud and imposture of him, that, by such works, would endeavour to persuade others, that he acts by a divine power and authority. There will be such a manifest plainness and sincerity, such a freedom and openness of behaviour, in a good man, acting under a divine influence, and sure of a divine assistance, as can never be found in the tricks of an impostor; who is obliged to perform his feats as it were in private, and at a distance from others, for

for fear of a discovery ; least the fraud should be seen through, and the falsehood and vanity of his pretensions thereby become exposed.

But however, tho' there may be some things, which may appear like miracles, though they really are not such ; yet it cannot be denied, but that there are others, which we may as certainly know to be above all the powers of human nature, as we can be sure of any one single truth whatsoever ; things that, at first view, will manifestly discover themselves to be the effects of some cause more excellent than our selves. That any man should foretell events, that depend on certain fixed laws of causes and effects, that he understands, is not to be wondered at ; but that he should foretell very distant things, that depend on the arbitrary determination of free agents, or that seem to be entirely at the pleasure and orderance of providence, can, I think, never be accounted for, but from some intimation given him by a wiser and more knowing being than himself. That men should understand, and speak different languages, after a long course of study and application, is nothing more than may be expected ; but that mean and unlearned persons,

sons, who were never bred up to the knowledge of books, and never had the opportunity of conversing with others of foreign countries, should, in an instant, become acquainted with all the languages of the most different nations, so as to understand others when speaking, and to be able to speak to others distinctly themselves, supposing the fact real, it is absolutely impossible, that it can be owing to any lucky turn of the blood and spirits, to any thing of slight or craft, or in a word, to any thing less than the influence and information of some superior intelligence. Once more, proper remedies, skilfully applied, have a natural tendency to cure diseases, to strengthen the constitution, and confirm the bodily vigour and health; but to be able, by a single word, to make a sick man well, the lame and maimed sound and whole, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dead to return to life, is as evidently above all the powers of mankind to do, without the assistance of some superior being, as the greatest impossibility in nature. Whoever the person be, that can perform such wonderful works as these, doth real miracles; and thereby evidently proves himself to act by some supernatural

pernatural help ; if not under the immediate influence of the God of nature himself.

But supposing for once, that men should be deceived in taking that for a miracle, which really is none ; yet are they not, merely on this account, obliged to submit to any one pretending to a divine commission, and producing such works as the vouchers of it. I do not apprehend that such things as seem most to exceed the powers of human nature, done by any person, are, in themselves, a sufficient testimonial that he is sent of God ; unless they can be proved to exceed the power of other beings superior to us, and to be done by the immediate interposition of God himself. This indeed will be an argument of his divine commission, and of the truth of every thing he delivers, confirmed by such testimonials. But this we shall find a very difficult task to prove ; because we know not what different orders of created natures there may be ; and how much superior the powers and facultics imparted to some, are to those of others. Till we can ascertain this, we ought not too positively to assert, even of the most wonderful events that have hitherto happened, that they were produced immediately by the hand of

of God, and not by the ministration or agency of inferior spirits.

So that all that real miracles seem directly to prove, is, either that some superior agent hath furnished the person that doth them, with a power which otherwise he had not ; or that there is such a confederacy and union between some invisible power and that person, as that, for certain ends, and at particular times, such effects shall be produced by his power, and at the others bidding and command. But whether this be done by a good, or a bad spirit, by God and his ministers, or by his and our enemies, other circumstances must determine.

Such works, indeed, will command our attention and regard, and seem to be an obligation upon us to consider whatever comes attested with such testimonials. But that they are not sufficient vouchers, in themselves, of a divine commission, is evident ; because real miracles have been wrought, to weaken the credit of an authority actually derived from God ; and because the scriptures suppose that they may be wrought in confirmation of false pretences, and in opposition to the true religion. The producing of serpents, blood, and frogs, was, at least,

as to the judgment which the spectators could form of it, as real a miracle, when done by the *Ægyptian* sorcerers, as when done by *Moses*. It was a work which argued if in one, of consequence in both, the assistance of some superior power; nor could any of those that saw it believe it to be any other than a real miracle, *i. e.* they must attribute it to the operation of some invisible agent. If therefore every miracle be a proof of the divine mission of him, that would confirm such an authority by doing it, it follows, that the *Ægyptians* would have been bound to have acknowledged the divine mission both of *Moses*, and their own *Magicians* too; *i. e.* to own both parts of a contradiction to be true. To say that these things, when done by the magicians, were not real, but counterfeit miracles, is an objection, without any proof to support it, and I think a plain begging the question. The scripture doth not call them counterfeit, but supposes the transformation as real, when caused by the *Magicians*, as when effected by *Moses*. Nor do I see any reason at all to account it incredible, upon the supposition that they had the assistance of evil spirits, and acted

in confederacy with them, in opposition to God, and his servant *Moses*.

If therefore real miracles are not, in themselves, sufficient proofs of the divine authority of him that works them, neither can things falsely supposed to be so. Every pretender to divine revelation, whether his miracles be real or counterfeit, is not to be immediately believed. His character and message are first to be considered, before we can reasonably allow him to be a messenger and prophet from God. Let his works be never so wonderful, men need not be imposed on. There are methods within their power, of finding out the falsehood of such a one's pretensions, and of proving the impostor to be either a cunning jugler, or else in league with evil and destructive spirits. If men will but use the reason they have, they may easily preserve themselves from the most powerful delusions, and guard their minds from danger, in the midst of the most artful impostures ; tho' supported by all the cunning and subtilty of men, or with the assistance and wonderful works of all the powers of darkness, in confederacy with them.

But

But yet this may not be thought sufficient to solve the difficulty ; and some may be apt to imagine, that 'tis not consistent with the goodness of God, to suffer men, under the influence of civil spirits, to do miracles in confirmation of a real imposture. But supposing it consistent with the divine goodness to give any beings powers and faculties superior to us ; I do not see how the suffering them to exercise those powers can be inconsistent with it. If God had any where commanded us to look on every miracle as a sufficient proof of a divine mission, in him that pretends to it, undoubtedly he would suffer none to work miracles but himself, or his own messengers, in confirmation of his will deliver'd by them. But if God hath been pleas'd to acquaint us with the power and craft of evil spirits, and caution'd us against being deceived by them ; and if there are certain rules to distinguish between those works, done by the divine power, and those performed by the assistance of the Devil ; rules that lye open and plain to every serious enquirer ; the permission of evil spirits to do wonderful works, ought indeed to render us more careful and diligent in our enquiry.

enquiry into the proofs of every pretension to a divine mission, but carries in it not the least imputation upon the divine justice and goodness; because there will be no other danger of our being imposed on by them, but what arises from our own negligence, and want of serious impartial consideration. Both *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius Tyanaeus* are reported to have done many strange and surprizing things; and yet that both these were impostors might be as certainly known, as almost any truth whatsoever; *viz.* because they taught doctrines inconsistent with true piety, and did many things contrary to plain morality. Besides, if this argument from the divine goodness proves any thing, I think it will prove too much, *viz.* that 'tis inconsistent with the divine goodness to permit any thing to happen, that may prove a powerful temptation to men to forsake the truth, or believe an imposture; for I cannot imagine any reason why the permission of evil spirits to assist men in doing wonderful works, to support their false pretensions, should be inconsistent with the divine goodness, but because it might probably induce others to believe them. If so, of consequence whatever

would prove an equally strong temptation, must be for the same reason inconsistent with the goodness of God to permit; and thus we shall be scarce able to vindicate his wisdom and goodness, in suffering persecutions, because they have a stronger tendency to prevail with many to desert the truth, than real miracles, wrought by bad men, can have to persuade them to believe an imposture.

If indeed there should happen a competition between any person sent of God, and another acting under the influence of evil spirits, each pretending to confirm their mission by miracles and wonderful works, it is reasonable to imagine that God would so far interpose, as to shew where the imposture lay; either by restraining that power by which impostors act, or enabling his own messengers to perform such extraordinary things, in which evil spirits could not imitate and rival them. For, as the end of God in revealing his will to men is, that they may know and practise it, it seems inconsistent with his most perfect wisdom, to suffer bad men, acting under the power of evil spirits, to exceed his own servants in the proof they give of their mission from him. For if two contending parties each do the

same wonderful works, to establish quite different interests, so long of consequence they, before whom the works are wrought, must suspend their judgments, neither of the parties having as yet any right to be believed; and the power, which at last appears superior, will claim and deserve the greater regard. And therefore if God should suffer impostors to do works, more wonderful in themselves, and more in number, under the influence of their principals by whom they act, than his own messengers, this would be a weakening of their credit, and tend to overthrow the design of their mission from him; which is inconsistent with the most perfect wisdom to permit.

And agreeable hereto, in the contest between *Moses* and the *Egyptian* magicians, we find that *Moses* gave incontestable proofs, that he acted by a power vastly superior to what they did, both by restraining that influence by which they acted, and doing those wonderful works in which they could not imitate him. Whilst the works they each did were the same, and seemed to require the same power to do them, so far the contest was undecided, and to which side the victory would turn must have been to the

spectators doubtful. But when the magicians arts became all ineffectual, and the power by which they acted was entirely restrained, *Moses* triumphed in his continued power to do miracles; and from his works the spectators might easily conclude, that heaven itself seemed to decide the victory in his favour. Thus far 'tis reasonable to think that God may at all times interpose. But in other cases, as I do not see any need of the divine interposition, so I think we cannot very safely argue from the goodness and wisdom of God, how far he is oblig'd to restrain superior powers from acting agreeable to the capacities he hath given them.

It seems a matter of greater difficulty to reconcile this account of miracles with some expressions of our blessed Lord, relating to the proof of his mission from his heavenly father by his works. For he tells us, * *That if I bare witness of my self, my witness is not true, i. e.* if there was no other proof of my mission from God, but my own word or testimony of myself, I should not deserve to be believed; and therefore he refers them to his works, as the proper

* John v. 31.

testimonials that God had sent him. \ddagger But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the father hath given me to finish, the same works, that I do, bare witness of me, that the father hath sent me; as though the wonderful works he did were, in themselves, full evidence that the father had sent him. Agreeably hereto he elsewhere \dagger tells the Jews; If I do not the works of my father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the father is in me, and I in him. And hence in another place * he tells them, If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen, and hated both me and my father. Their rejecting him after they had seen his works, was an evident proof they hated him, and the father that sent him; so that he seems to condemn them, upon account of their rejecting the evidence of his works; and thereby declares them to be a sufficient proof of his divine authority and mission.

\ddagger John v. 31, 36. \dagger John x. 37, 38. * John xv. 24.

In answer to which difficulty, let it be considered, that where any works carry along with them the proofs of their being done by a divine power, either by the immediate interposition of God himself, or by the ministration of other beings, acting by commission from him, such works are a sufficient evidence of that person's commission from God, who doth them ; and whatever he confirms by such proofs, ought undoubtedly to be received ; because 'tis not consistent with God's wisdom or goodness, to be himself the instrument of confirming any false pretences to divine authority and inspiration ; nor with the character of any good being whatsoever, to lend his assistance for the support of an imposture. And therefore, if the works which our blessed Saviour did, were of such a nature, or attended with such peculiar circumstances, as was sufficient to prove them to be wrought by the immediate interposition of God himself (and of this kind, in my judgment, seem to be those extraordinary works of his, creating limbs for the maimed, and bread for the multitude, and raising the dead) or any other beings commissioned by him, undoubtedly their not believing him for the works sake,

was

was owing either to a sinful inadvertence, or criminal obstinacy.

But however if this should not be allowed, yet I think it no difficult matter to make it appear, that our Saviour's reasoning was just, if we consider the peculiar circumstances of the *Jews* to whom he spoke. There were many in whom they believed as prophets, and whom they reverenced as inspired persons, tho' several ages were past since they had lived in the world; whose works therefore they had never seen, and which, had they seen them, would have appeared vastly inferior to those done by Christ. Thus they had a great opinion of and veneration for *Moses*, who was, as it were, the founder of their nation, both as to religion and politticks. They looked on him as one that had been under a divine influence, and acted by immediate commission from God. And as for the succeeding prophets, they esteemed them as persons inspired by his spirit; and so accounted themselves as under obligations to believe, and regard whatever they found on record delivered by them, as the message and will of God himself. Now 'tis evident, that the miraculous works and predictions of *Moses*, and the other prophets,

was the principal reason of their belief in, and veneration for them. And therefore, if our blessed Saviour did as great, or even greater miracles than *Moses*, or any of the prophets that lived before his appearance in the world, the evidence of his divine mission was in itself greater than theirs, and therefore the *Jews*, at least, before whom his miracles were performed, ought to have received him for the very work's sake. Now this was the case, even the *Jews* themselves being judges. Thus *Nicodemus* argued him to have been a teacher sent from God, because *no man can do the works which thou dost, except God be with him*, strongly implying that they were very extraordinary, *John* iii. 2. And in another place, they cry out, surprized with his wonderful works, *It was never so seen in Israel*, *Mat.* ix. 33. And again, 'tis said, *Many of the people believed on him, crying out, when Christ comes, will he do more miracles than these, which this man hath done?* *John* vii. 31. when nevertheless they expected that *Christ* should excel, even on this account, all the prophets that were before him. And 'tis on this account, that our Saviour himself declares their sin, in rejecting

jecting him, to be peculiarly heinous. * *If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin. But now they have both seen, and hated both me and my father.* So that he blames them, not merely for rejecting the evidence he gave of his divine mission by miracles, but because they rejected his evidence, tho' it was superior to that of all the other prophets that were before him; in whom they nevertheless believed.

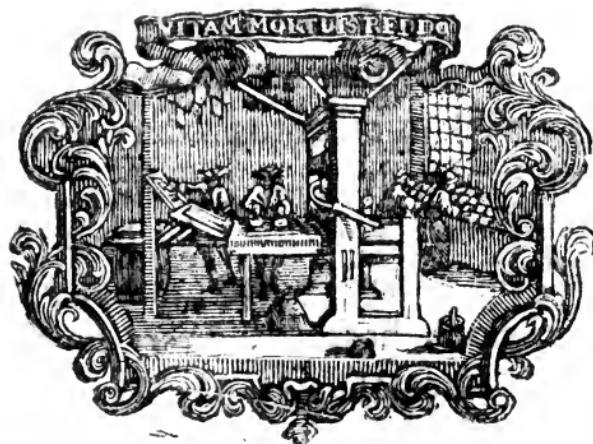
And to conclude this head, we shall farther find, that whatever stress our Lord, at some times, seems to have laid on his miracles, yet that, elsewhere, he appeals to his word, and the doctrines he taught; which he represents to be of such a nature, as that the miraculous works he did, in confirmation of them, could be effected by no other power but that of God. Thus he urges it as a reason that men should love him, or receive and believe in him, because the † word which they heard *was not his, but the father's which sent him.* And in another place ‡ he tells us, that God would judge every one that should reject him, *Because I*

* John xv. 24. † John xiv. 24. ‡ John xii. 49.

have not spoken of myself, but the father hath sent me ; he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And to mention no more, his answer to the Jews, who said he cast out Devils through *Belzebub*, the chief of Devils, makes it abundantly plain, that it was not miracles alone, that he insisted on as a sufficient proof of his mission from God his father ; but on miracles, as wrought in confirmation of doctrines opposite to the interest of Devils. * *Every kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against it self shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then shall his kingdom stand ?* The bare casting out of Devils from a possessed person, was no argument that Satan was divided against himself. This he might have suffered impostors to do, to give the greater confirmation and credit to the imposture, and hereby to have strengthened his own authority and interest among mankind. But if any person doth miracles, who himself is an eminently good and

* Mat. xiii. 25, 26.

holy man, in confirmation of doctrines tending to godliness; if he lays claim to a divine mission, and the evident tendency of his mission is to destroy the works of the Devil, and to recover men to the knowledge and worship of the one only living and true God, and proves his pretensions by casting out devils, and other wonderful works; 'tis as evident that he cannot do this, under the influence and power of the Devil, as that the Devil cannot be supposed willing to weaken, and destroy his own authority and interest in this world.





C H A P. II.

Of the use of Miracles.

AVING in the former chapter stated my notion of miracles, and cleared it from the principal difficulties that might seem to clog it, I now proceed to consider the use of miracles, and to shew for what reasons one might probably expect they should be wrought; or for what ends God may be reasonably thought to interpose, in order to produce them.

And 'tis evident, at first view, that the design of miracles cannot be to prove, or establish the proofs of the principles of natural religion; because the very supposition of God's interposing by miracles, supposes also the certainty of his being, perfections and providence; and because every pretended revelation is to be judged of by the dictates

states of reason, and its conformity to those natural notions of God and goodness that are implanted in us, and by which all doctrines, that miracles are pretended to be wrought in confirmation of, must be examined, before we can be under any obligation to receive them. So that the very supposition of a miracle implies, that these notions are true, and therefore cannot be wrought to prove them so.

'Tis indeed reasonable to think, that God may send a person into the world, furnished with a power to work miracles, to recover mankind to a sense of these important principles and truths, that have been long buried under deep ignorance and vice; as well as to reveal to them other matters, of great moment, and consequence to their happiness. This certainly was one view of that revelation God made by *Moses* to the *Jews*, and of his speaking to us, in these latter days, by his son. Such was the stupidity and wickedness that had almost universally prevailed, as made it necessary, that a messenger from God, furnished with the noblest credentials of his divine mission, should appear, and preach up these first and most necessary, tho' almost forgotten and forsaken prin-

principles, of the being of a God, and his providence, and the obligations to virtue and goodness. But then 'tis to be considered, that the miracles wrought by such a person, are not wrought as proofs of the being of a God, or his providence, or the difference between good and evil; but as proofs of his mission from God, and hereby to procure the greater authority and credit to his preaching. And indeed there is nothing more evident, than that the preaching up a mission from God, supposes the reality of his being, perfections, and providence, and that therefore miracles cannot be wrought, or appealed to, as the proofs of it.

Nor are miracles necessary as a farther testimony to the truth of any former revelation, which hath already been sufficiently confirmed of God, and the proofs of which may be found out by every serious and impartial enquirer; agreeable to that answer of *Abraham* to the rich man in the parable, desiring that *Lazarus* might be sent to his father's house. * *Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.* And he said, nay, father

* Luke xv. 49, &c.

Abraham ; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead. The revelation of God by Moses was sufficiently attested ; therefore to ask new miracles in proof of it was unreasonable, and had such a request been granted, it would have proved ineffectual to answer the purpose intended by it. 'Tis indeed inconsistent with the wisdom, justice and goodness of God, to require men to believe, or punish them for not believing, what they cannot have sufficient evidence to convince them of the truth of. But if any former revelation hath been sufficiently attested, and the arguments for the certainty of such a revelation may be known, and understood by application and enquiry ; if men, either by negligence or sloth, thro' pride and obstinate prejudice, will not see, or not acknowledge the evidence, as they act a very unreasonable part, so I cannot apprehend that the divine being is under any obligation, from any of his perfections, to work new miracles to persuade them to believe, what there was sufficient reason for their believing without them. God hath been pleased so to order the

the circumstances of religion, as that it shall be a matter of our choice ; and to cover it with some difficulties, that men may use care and diligence in searching, both into its nature and evidence ; that so their very believing may be an act of the greatest reason, and not owing to an overbearing testimony and power, but to those rational motives and inducements, that are naturally suited to convince, and persuade men. But if God must work new miracles, to satisfie every one's unreasonable cavils against the evidence of religion, there will be no longer room for enquiry, nor use of reason ; but God will be under a necessity of continually working miracles, to gratify the pride and vanity of every one that requires them.

The truth of former facts can only be known by testimony ; and the testimony may be of such a nature, and attended with such degrees of probability, as that it may be altogether as unreasonable to reject what is thus confirm'd, as to deny the truth of any demonstration whatsoever. The adversaries of the christian religion do not scruple to believe, that there were such men as *Jesus Christ, Simon Magus, and Appollonius Tyaneus* ; who pretended to be extraordinary per-

persons, and do many wonderful works. Nor do I find that they make any great difficulty of allowing that the two latter did in fact many such things ; since they have been set up in competition to *Jesus Christ* ; tho' tis universally confess'd, that there were no doctrines worthy of God, nor conducive to the happiness of men, that either of them had to support by these works ; and altho' the evidence for the facts themselves is very small, and not, by a thousand degrees, so strong, as what may be produced for the truth of our Saviour's miracles. And yet as to these they are incurable unbelievers, and make the most obstinate resistance to them, tho' evidently wrought for the noblest ends, viz. to recover men to a sense of God and goodness, and lead them into the way of happiness ; and tho' the evidence for the reality of them is, I verily believe, as great, as we have for the certainty of any past facts whatsoever. And if thus by unreasonable prejudices they prevent themselves from discerning that full evidence, on which christianity is founded, and then reject it, under the pretence of its not having sufficient evidence ; I see no reason why they should expect any fresh proof, nor to think they

would be convinced by it, if they had it.

It is by many of the more considerate deists themselves confess'd, that *Jesus Christ* was an excellent moralist; that his precepts were agreeable to reason, and our natural notions of God and goodness; and that he was himself a very good and virtuous man, excepting his claim to a divine authority and mission, which they look upon as a meer fiction, and upon all his miracles as idle stories, or the deluding tricks of a cunning jugler. But I would ask, have they any other ground to believe that he gave such precepts, than they have to believe that he did such works? Is it reasonable to think, that a man who gave such excellent descriptions of God, that, with such strength and force, preached up the necessity and obligation of moral duties, and so often inculcated the belief of future rewards and punishments, and died to confirm these things by his blood; could yet carry on an imposture throughout his whole life; and, by such a notorious affront to God's majesty, and imposition upon mankind, act in defiance to the belief of a God, the obligations of virtue, and the influence of those rewards and punishments which he taught? Or have the evangelists given us a true account of

our Saviour's morality, and yet invented the story of his miracles, to do the greater honour to their master ? But if they were such very bad men, as first to invent, and then spread the story of his miracles, I should as little credit the account they have given us of his morals. Or shall we, to finish the matter at once, reject the whole story of Christ as a fable, and deny that he ever lived in the world, and that the morality of the gospel is of his teaching, and the works ascribed to him of his performing ; then must we be reduced to the manifest absurdity, of denying the strongest evidence for the truth of facts, that ever was, or can be given to the world. No one proposition in nature is more evidently true than this ; that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived and died in *Judea* ; and if we allow this, we must farther acknowledge, that he led an excellent life, and taught admirable lessons of morality ; and then we must also be forced to believe one step farther, *viz.* That he did many wonderful works in confirmation of them ; because we have no other evidence for the truth of one than of the other. So that christianity stands, at least, upon the foot of very great probability ; such

as would abundantly perswade in any other case. It seems to have all the certainty which can belong to things of such a nature ; and therefore as men's infidelity is their fault, they ought not to expect any new testimony from God, for the proof of what he hath already abundantly confirmed.

The possibility of Miracles, as I have stated them, I believe none will doubt of ; and therefore I can see no objection of any force, that can be brought against them, but either that they were improper to answer the end designed by them, or that the end might have been more effectually answered another way. The end of them undoubtedly was to give a sufficient credit and authority to our Lord's person and pretensions. It was necessary to give a proper weight to his doctrines and precepts, that men should know he was the messenger of God, and authorized by him to instruct and save them : Otherwise the very attempt to introduce a new religion would have been foolish, and must have proved ineffectual. It would have been impossible ever to have perswaded the Jews to abandon a religion, actually instituted by God, and for which, on this account, they had the highest veneration, without the most express

express and clear warrant from God himself; or to have prevailed with the *Gentiles* to abandon the altars of their deities, without some incontestible proofs, that those persons acted by a divine commission, who preached to them *to turn from such vanities*. And what other proof could there be so strong and convincing as miracles? These certainly proved them to act by a supernatural assistance, and from a thousand other circumstances it was easy to prove, that they acted by commission from God. It was not sufficient that they affirmed this of themselves; nor were their doctrines alone, tho' agreeable to truth and reason, an evidence of their divine inspiration. To give them therefore their proper weight, and in order to their being universally receiv'd amongst men, it was necessary that those who preached them should be declared the messengers of God; either by a voice from heaven, or else by having such a power and authority communicated to them, that should evidently prove, that they acted under a superior agency and influence; of which their doing miracles, things beyond the power of human nature to do, was an abundant demonstration. If then it be a design worthy of God to recover men to virtue and happiness;

ness ; to authorize persons for this purpose, and give them sufficient credentials for the satisfaction of others ; 'tis evident that miracles are proper to answer this end, and naturally conduce to subserve the gracious designs of providence, in reference to the perfection and happiness of men ; and therefore there can be no argument brought from the perfections of God, why he should not himself interpose in this matter, or suffer others to do it in his name, unless any one can find out a more proper method to accomplish such an end ; to which I have hitherto been a stranger.

And since, if God should give any person this testimonial of his being sent of him, the proof would be so far peculiar to the time when such a one should appear, as that none but those, with whom he conversed, could be eye witnesses to the facts themselves, and all others could receive no knowledge of them but by tradition, and the report of those that saw them, or to whom they related them ; if such tradition be faithful, if there be concurrent accounts of the facts themselves, and if those who relate them are men of credit and veracity ; in a word, if we have the same certainty of them,

them, as we can have of any other past facts, the reason is the same why we should believe the one as the other: And if the christian religion stands upon such a foundation of probability as this, it must be owing to an unreasonable criminal prejudice in any to reject it, or to require new proofs of its divine authority and original.

If it be said by any, could we but see one new miracle wrought in confirmation of christianity, it would be a great satisfaction to us, as to the truth of those pretended to be wrought by Christ and his apostles, I answer : If those miracles were not in themselves incredible, if the end said to be answered by them is consistent with the perfections of God, and conducive to the true interests of men ; and if there be as much proof that they were in fact wrought, as the nature of the thing will bear, to ask a farther proof, of any sort, is an unreasonable request ; and therefore as there is no need for any fresh interposition of providence to confirm what is already sufficiently proved, there can be no room to expect it.

But supposing that God should condescend to gratify such a desire as this, what would be the consequence ? Would suchbecom e

immediate converts to the christian faith, upon the evidence of one or a few miracles, who reject it tho' innumerable miracles have been wrought to confirm it? I am afraid their infidelity would not be so soon or easily overcome; nor the lesser proof effect, what the much greater cannot do. Should a real miracle be wrought before them, it would be, either only a proof that they were possible; but that is already as evident, as that there are beings to us superior in power and wisdom, and so far would be of no service to the proof of christianity: Or else being wrought in favour of the christian religion, might be looked on as an additional testimony to the truth of it; but even this would be no farther testimony, *i. e.* no other sort of testimony, than what we have already to depend on; and there would be much more reason for a suspicion of fraud and cheat in one, or a few works of this kind, than in the innumerable many wrought by Christ and his apostles. Or should such persons, who are not satisfied with the proof, on which christianity already stands, believe the miracle real; I cannot be sure, that they would not be of the same temper with the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, who, when they could not

not deny the miracle, prevented the good effect it ought to have had on their minds, by crying out, *This fellow casteth not out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.*

Mat. ix. 34. Or that they would not reason like the priests and saducees in the *Act*s*,iv. 10.* who, upon the wonderful cure wrought on the impotent man by Peter and John, came to this wise and honest resolution, *What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther amongst the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.* And I would farther ask, in what manner they would have this testimony by miracle given? A miracle in itself would no more prove christianity to be true, than any other institution whatsoever, unless applied to this purpose. Would they therefore have God himself to speak to them, and tell them that this miracle was wrought in confirmation of it? This supposes something else necessary to convince them, than the christian doctrines confirmed by miracles, and so supposes the very evidence they desire insufficient. Or would they have a

second person sent into the world, to preach up the divine authority and religion of Christ, and confirm it by new miracles? Will they therefore believe christianity to be true, if they hear a person declare it so, and see him work a miracle to confirm it? If this be a reasonable ground of belief, they ought to become immediate converts to the christian faith, which, they may know, is supported by this sort of proof already, in its highest perfection. And therefore their disbelieving christianity, notwithstanding this evidence for the truth of it, shews they would not think this kind of proof sufficient. And indeed how could they reasonably be convinc'd by a few miracles, wrought by a person, who never was a witness to the truth of what he affirms, rather than by the innumerable miracles wrought by Christ himself, and his apostles after him? This would be altogether as unreasonable, as if any one should reject the history of *Julius Cæsar* as a fiction, tho' he had the writings of *Cæsar* himself, and the concurrent testimony of all the ancient *Roman* authors; and yet at last be convinced upon the single authority of a modern one. But supposing they should be convinced, have not others the same reason to

to expect the same satisfaction with themselves? And is not God under the same obligation to give it to all, as to one? If so, 'twill follow that there is need of a perpetual course of miracles, to the end of the world, to keep up the credit and authority of christianity. And even this would effectually destroy the very design, pretended to be answered by it. For miracles being thus made cheap and common, would cease to be wonderful and surprizing, and so have no power to convince and perswade men; no more effect on them than the rising of the sun, or the fresh life and verdure of the spring, which can be accounted for no other way, than I know of, but from the sole will and power of the creator.

It is no wonder, if, in such a number of ages, since the first appearance of christianity in the world, there should arise some matters of difficulty and dispute concerning it, of which we may not be able to give an easy and satisfactory account. But then it ought to be considered, that this is not peculiar to christianity, nor the books of the New Testament. In all ancient books, as they have been often transcribed, there will be of necessity various readings; which must happen to the sacred

sacred writings as well as to any other, unless we can suppose that God was obliged to guide every transcriber's hand, or take care that no errors should come out from the press. The providence of God is abundantly vindicated, by taking care that no such errors shall happen, which may lead men into opinions and practices contrary to the end and design of the revelation given. As for other things of lesser consequence, where, neither the interest of the divine government, nor the happiness of men are concerned, to assert it necessary that God should interpose to prevent any differences or disputes about them, is to affirm it necessary, that God should interpose in a very extraordinary manner, tho' there be no extraordinary occasion to require it. The great end of a revelation from God undoubtedly can only be, to acquaint men with his will in reference to their duty, and to encourage them by proper motives to perform it; that so they may obtain his favour, and secure their own happiness. And therefore all the objections formed against the sacred books, upon account of the differences, that may be found in the several copies we have of them, will appear to be of no force to prove

prove them not written by a divine authority and influence, till it can be proved that the original design of them is hereby quite obscured, and that therefore they are insufficient to make men virtuous and happy. And indeed till this be made out, the objection carries in it this manifest contradiction, That the scriptures cannot be from God, because there is in them such a number of various readings, as render them insufficient to accomplish that great end, for which they are abundantly sufficient.

And as to all histories of ancient date, there will also arise difficulties, either with respect to the chronology, facts, references and customs, that, at this distance of time, we may not easily account for; whilst nevertheless, with the greatest reason, we believe the histories in general to be true, and the authors of them to be persons of integrity and credit. And if this be no objection, with any man of common understanding and reason, against his believing the history of past times, why should the same difficulties, attending christianity, prejudice any person from receiving it? Since they require no new proof for the truth of ancient facts in other cases, but what they have from the

concurrent testimony of antient writers; and scruple not to believe particular histories, tho' in some parts very liable to just exceptions; if the testimony in favour of christianity be as strong and full, there will be, notwithstanding all the difficulties that attend it, the same reason for believing it, and no need of any further proofs to confirm it; and therefore as farther miracles are in themselves needless, 'tis unreasonable to expect them.

The only end therefore and use of miracles that I can think of, when wrought by the assistance of God, or good spirits in subjection to him, seems to be this, *viz.* to confirm that person's mission from God, who comes in his name, and by his authority, and hath a revelation of his will to impart to men: Or 'tis reasonable to think that God will interpose, and give an extraordinary assistance to his servants, when 'tis necessary to convince men of their mission from him, and in order to secure the greater credit to the message they deliver in his name. No considerate person can imagine, that God will send a special messenger from himself, but on cases of very great importance and necessity; and when ever he sees

sees fit to do it, we may be assured he will enable him to support the character, which he hath honoured him with, by giving him such credentials, as shall be a sufficient proof of his divine instruction and authority. Now 'tis evident that the most excellent doctrines and precepts, that can be delivered, would not in themselves be a proper evidence of any persons mission from God ; because possibly his own reasonable powers and faculties might have been sufficient for the discovery of these things ; and therefore 'tis necessary he should have farther proof to appeal to, even such works, in which it may evidently appear, to all impartial enquirers, that he acts under a superior power and influence ; such works in which, either the hand of God himself may be discovered, or at least the ministration of good beings under him.

For whatever miracles can be proved to be done, either by the immediate interposition of God himself, or by the agency of good spirits, this will be a certain proof, that the person who doth them, ought to be regarded as a messenger from God. For tho' false prophets may do real miracles, to justify false pretensions, by the assistance of superior evil spirits ; and tho' there doth not appear

appear any sufficient reason to think, that God is always obliged to suspend those powers he hath given them, or hinder their doing many wonderful works, for the support of their own interest and authority; yet 'tis not reconcileable with any of the divine perfections, to imagine that God himself will actually support false pretensions, or exert his own power for the confirmation of a lye. Nor will any wise and good spirits be instrumental to support, and propagate a real imposture, or concur with a wicked man in perswading others to believe, that he hath that authority from God, which he actually hath not; for this would destroy the supposition of their being wise or good.

But it may be asked, what need is there of miracles for this end? Or why should God interpose in this extraordinary manner, when the same end may be answered without it? Is not the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil, virtue and vice, easily discoverable without a miracle to inform us, or any divine interposition to discover these things to us?

I answer, that it must be acknowledged, that there have been some, who, by the meer light of nature, have made noble discoveries with reference

ference to God, and moral goodness. The writings of *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and others abound with the noblest sentiments and rules, and shew the vast reach, and excellent tendency of our reasonable powers, when they are carefully exercised and improved. But could there be more of these instances produced than there can, it would not in the least disprove the expediency, not to say the necessity of revelation.

'Tis however evident, that the number of such persons hath been always very few. One or two in an age seem to be the most, that meer nature could ever form, or raise up; and therefore it must be proved, either that these few were capable, and willing to instruct and reform the world ; or else that the generality of mankind, throughout all ages of the world, have needed no information and instruction, before any reasonable objections can be urged against the necessity of a revelation, supported by proper proofs.

To affirm that there never hath been a time, when mankind have needed instruction and reformation, and of consequence when a revelation from God would

have been highly useful, and conducive to the general welfare, would be to contradict the most authentick and antient histories. If we consider the account given, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, by the *New Testament* writers, as bare historians only, they appear to have been in the most deplorable circumstances of ignorance and vice. Thus St. *Paul* represents the *Gentiles* in general, as persons that knew not God, neither were thankful, who changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things, who changed the truth of God into a lye, and worshipped and served the creature more than the eternally blessed Creator, and who were therefore given up of God to uncleanness, and to vile Affections, Rom. i. 21. &c. And in another place he speaks of them, as persons dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in times past, they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience; as having their

conversation in the lusts of the flesh, and fulfilling the desires of the fleshly mind; and of consequence as children of wrath, and without hope, and God in the world, Eph. ii. 2, 3. &c. This is a plain and historical account of the then circumstances of the heathen world; and this account is confirmed by the best writers amongst themselves, who are full of the gross idolatry, and horrid vices that too universally prevailed amongst mankind. And as to the Jews, who boasted of their sacred oracles, how strangely degenerated were they from the faith and piety of their ancestors? With what enormous crimes did our Saviour reprobate them? as an *hypocritical adulterous generation*, Mat. xii. 39. as teaching the commandments of men for doctrines of God, Mat. xv. 9. as transgressing the commandments of God, and making them of none effect by their tradition, v. 3. 6. yea, as blind leaders of the blind, v. 14. as devourers of widows houses, making long prayers thro' a pretence of extraordinary piety, as paying tythe of mint, anise and cummin, but omitting the weightier mat-

ters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth; as full of extortion and excess, and of all hypocrisy and iniquity, Mat. xxiii. throughout. This was the character of their priests and teachers; and how miserable therefore must the condition of the people be, who were under such hypocritical and abandoned guides. And this account is agreeable to that given of them by *Josephus*, a writer and countryman of their own, who represents them as a most wicked and detestable generation, who would have been consumed by the special vengeance of God, had they not been destroyed by the *Roman* army. So true was that representation of St. Paul, *All, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Rom. iii. 23.*

Now I would ask any considerate person, whether or no, in such an universal degeneracy and deep ignorance, supposing the being and providence of a God, it would not have been highly worthy of the suprem wisdom and goodness, to have interposed to recover men to the knowledge of those truths that had been so long, and so entirely lost; and to the practice of

of that virtue and goodness from which there was so total an apostacy? Is it reasonable to think, that the Father of men could view these wretched circumstances of his own offspring without a tender compassion of their case? Or can we suppose that the divine mercy would withhold the necessary relief; or that, if there was no other way, that could so effectually recover men as a revelation from himself, it should be inconsistent with the divine wisdom, and unnecessary on the part of men, for God to grant it? And can we imagine that any messenger would have been more proper to reveal the will of God to men, than a man like themselves? Or that any more effectual method could have been thought of, to awaken them out of their stupidity, than that a man should boldly proclaim himself the messenger of God, and sent by him to reform and save the world; leading himself the most exemplary life, loudly calling men to repentance, preaching up the doctrine of one God, and the worship of him in spirit and truth; encouraging the hopes of those that should believe in and obey

him, and awakning the fears of others by denouncing the wrath of God, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and as the proof of his divine mission, without any controul or hindrance, raising the dead, curing the diseased, restoring sight to the blind, and limbs to the maimed; creating bread for the hungry, calming the winds, stilling the waves and tumults of the sea, casting out devils, prophecyng of his own death, and of his glorious resurrection that should immediately ensue? Would not all that beheld him stand astonished at such a teacher, and such mighty works? And would not such an inference as this be very just, *This man could do nothing unless God were with him.*

That no person, but one thus instructed and furnished of God, was capable of reforming the world under the circumstances in which it lay, at our Saviour's appearance, is I think almost demonstrable; and if so, the necessity of a revelation at this juncture will appear, and of consequence the necessity of miracles, to give him the greater credit

credit and authority that was to bring it.

For instance, who could, with any hope of success, have undertaken the work of converting the heathen world from their idolatry and vice? 'Tis true the wiser of them contemned the gods the generality adored, and saw the absurdity of the religious worship that was paid them. But still they knew not how to prevent what, with justice, they so often rediculed. They did indeed, now and then, reason well in their writings. But with what guard and caution, least they should become suspected by the people, and charged with contempt of the gods their country worshipped? And how meanly did they comply with the prevailing superstitions of the time, and countenance the general impiety by their own example. Herein even *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Piatarch*, and others of the most eminent heathens were exceeding criminal; and therefore, with all their excellencies, were every way unfit to become the teachers and reformers of others.

Besides, where can we find, in all the writings of these men, any one plain

uniform consistent scheme of things? When they speak of the being of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future world of rewards and punishments, doctrines of the greatest importance, do they speak of them with full assurance themselves, or give any convincing proofs of the truth of them to others? In one dispute they seem to allow that these things are highly probable; in the next they hesitate, retract and deny. Had they therefore designed their writings for the benefit of others, how could they have understood their real sentiments; how could they have been assured which was their last prevailing opinion? They wrote indeed like men at a loss, and in very great uncertainty. And indeed how should they do otherwise, when many of the divine perfections, the most acceptable method of worshipping God, and the state and circumstances of a future world, cannot possibly be known but by a revelation from God?

But now supposing that there were none of these defects in the writings of these great men, but that they contained

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an uniform scheme of truth, and a perfect system of morals, yet still they would have been unfit for reforming the world, and incapable of accomplishing the necessary work. For all, that know any thing of mankind, know, that there are but few capable of abstracted reasonings, and that bare lectures of morality and virtue are likely to have but little success, unless attended with proper motives and encouragements. Now herein all the writings of the pagan philosophers were exceeding deficient. *Cotta* and *Balbus* might dispute for ever *de natura deorum*, and yet not make one convert from Idolatry; and *Cicero* might write like an Angel *de finibus bonorum & malorum*, and quote the authorities of the antient *Sages of Greece*; and yet, if he had no better motives to urge to a prejudiced ignorant vicious multitude, remain without influence or success. Vices long established, universally practised, encouraged by the examples of supposed deities, and sanctified even by the solemnities of religious worship, were not to be restrained or cured by the authority or writings of one or two private

vate philosophers, who taught better than they lived, and prevented the good effects their best precepts might have had, by shewing too little regard to them in their own behaviour. I could wish one of our modern *Deists* would make the experiment; let him draw up a consistent scheme of natural truths, and make the most perfect collection of moral duties from *Cicero* and *Seneca*, and if he pleases, from the *gospels* of *Jesus Christ*, and the *Epistles* of *Paul*, and travel into the *Indies*, or *Africa*, and spread them among the nations inhabiting those countries, and try what harvest he can make amongst them, upon this foundation. The reclaiming of those ignorant people from their miserable circumstances, the instilling into them better notions of God, and just sentiments of morality and virtue, would really be a very charitable undertaking, and unquestionably acceptable to the Deity. If they find any tolerable success, without pretending to a divine mission, or working any miracles amongst those they would reform, I should then begin to question the necessity of a divine

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revelation; and of consequence of those miracles, that, as yet, seem to me to be necessary to the proof of it.

I may be thought possibly to be injest in making such a proposal, and I believe I shall find no one very ready to comply with it. 'Tis however I think absolutely necessary, either that some one or other of them should do this, or that they should produce an instance of some universal alteration made in the religious sentiments and practices of mankind, without any pretence to miracles, or divine inspiration, in order to render the supposition possible. Nothing certainly appears more incredible or unlikely; and I am apt to think, that no considerate person will easily believe it, 'till some instance or other of the like nature can be produced, or the tempers of men become exceedingly altered. It is well known that the *ancient lawgivers*, amongst the *Greeks* and *Romans*, thought it necessary, to secure a due obedience to their laws, to pretend they received them by *inspiration from the Gods*. The *Jewish republick* owed its rise entirely to, at least, the supposed *au-
thority*

uthority of God; and it was this that made the *apostles* of Christ so abundantly successful, because they declared themselves, and were believed by others *to be the messengers of God*. Nor was *Mahomet* wanting in this pretence, who, styled himself *the apostle of God*; who because he could perform no miracles, took another method to support the character he had usurped, *viz.* by sheathing his sword in the bowels of those, who would not receive him as such.

Since therefore all the remarkable changes, as to religion and manners, that have ever been made in the world, have been introduced and managed by the pretence to, and claim of a divine authority, in the great authors of them; and since it doth not, in the nature of the thing, seem probable, that mankind should, in any age of the world, be recovered from a state of universal degeneracy and ignorance, to a better state of knowledge and virtue, but under the influence of this perswasion, that the persons endeavouring to reform them act in the name of, and by warrant from God; a revelation from God, supported by
miracles,

miracles, or other proper proofs, will appear highly necessary, if it can be shewn that mankind ever have been in such a state of universal degeneracy and ignorance. It is an act worthy the supreme goodness to save men from such deplorable circumstances, and becoming the infinite wisdom of God to interpose by his own authority, the more effectually to accomplish it.

I do not see how this reasoning can be shewn to be inconclusive, but by urging, what I think may be retorted on the objectors, with great advantage, *viz.* that God might reveal himself to every particular person; and that this would be a more certain means of reforming men, and entirely supersede the use and necessity of miracles. 'Tis allowed that God might do so, if he had pleased. But then this would have been to have treated men, not as reasonable beings, or free agents; and would have made their knowledge and virtue as necessary as the shape of their bodies, or features of their face. *i. e.* 'Tis to suppose that God must have acted in a manner, not suitable to the state and circum-

circumstances of his creatures, but contrary to the reason and nature of things. For as mankind are made capable of judging and determining for themselves, reason teaches us, that their religion and virtue should not be from an overuling necessity or constraint, but the result of an impartial enquiry, and free choice. But besides, this supposition, if it may be thought to remove one difficulty, yet manifestly substitutes a greater in its room. For which is the most probable supposition, either that God should, upon some very extraordinary occasion, when there was need of his immediate interposition, go a little out of the common course of things, to answer a very wise and gracious design; or that he should continually supersede, and act contrary to those laws, which are of his own establishing. That God should be continually making a new revelation of himself to every man, tho' there was no real necessity for it, is certainly more extraordinary and incredible, than that he should do it upon special occasions, when the general benefit of mankind required it, and might have been effectually secured

cured by it : And therefore an exception against the necessity and use of miracles, as I have stated it, that implies the necessity of a much greater miracle in the room of it, is made contrary to the laws of just reasoning, and without any advantage to the objectors.





C H A P. III.

*Containing the Rules of
judging by whom Miracles
are performed.*

INCE, as hath been already shewn, all miracles done by men are performed, either by the assistance of God himself, or, which is the same thing, the ministration of his angels; or by spirits engaged in an opposite interest to God, and for purposes contrary to his; our next enquiry is, how we may distinguish one from the other; or satisfy ourselves when miracles are done by God and good spirits, or by evil ones in opposition to him. And here

I. There

I. There are several rules we have to judge by, that respect the works themselves pretended to be done. As that the things be in themselves possible; since no power whatsoever can effect that which is strictly impossible. And therefore we may be sure, that an impossibility, or what implies a real contradiction, represented as a miracle, and for the proof of which recourse is had to the divine power, never was, or can be effected; and therefore *transubstantiation*, the standing miracle of the *church of Rome*, is a falsity and imposture; and so far from being a proof of the infallibility of that *church*, that it's asserting this monstrous doctrine is a demonstration of its being a very erroneous one.

'Tis also necessary, that the things be probable as well as possible; that they do not carry along with them the appearance of romance and fable, which would, unavoidably, very much prejudice men against believing them. For it doth not seem at all likely, that God would make use of means, that should seem incredible, to confirm the truth; or that he would

go too far out of the course of nature to support a character, that might be more effectually supported another way. And therefore, some of the few miracles, pretended to be wrought by Mahomet, viz. his *splitting of the moon*, and his *wonderful journey to heaven*; and others which Philostratus relates of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, in his life, viz. that *vessels of wine and water, tables, cups, and dishes, placed themselves in order, for his entertainment among the Indians*; that he *understood the language of birds*, that he *conversed with the ghost of Achilles, and the like*, look at first view like dreams and fables; and have no pretence to be believed. Indeed the very telling such stories is enough to confute the truth of them.

But what is principally to be regarded on this head is, that the things pretended to be done be such, as that 'tis consistent with the perfections of God to interest himself in; and with his character, as governor of the word, to do. As that they be such, as plainly discover somewhat of that mighty power, which necessarily belongs to the eternal being; not such as look like

like the little tricks and cunning deceits of artful impostors. Of this sort are many of the pretended miracles of the church of *Rome*; the *liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood*; the *sweating and bowing of the image of the Virgin Mary, and the like*; things too mean to require the interposition of the Almighty's power, and which look like nothing but the tricks and rogueries of wicked and deceitful priests. Again, they must be such as are agreeable to the notions we have of the perfection of the divine wisdom; things that do not carry with them an air of ambiguity, and that are not liable to just suspicion and exception. For, as God can do whatever he pleaseth, so we have reason to think, that he, who is *infinite in understanding*, will give his messengers such credentials, as shall be certain and valid. And therefore we may be assured, that the *heathen* oracles, which were generally delivered in very ambiguous terms, in words that had a double meaning, or no certain determinate sense, and which would answer the event which way ever it should happen, were not

from him, *to whom all things are naked and open*; but proceeded, either from the priests, who could not foresee the event, or from evil and deluding spirits, who could not secure it. Again, they must be such things as answer to the character of God, as a good and gracious being. For tho', sometimes, he may see proper to punish an obstinate rebellious people, by *terrible things in righteousness*, whom the most miraculous instances of goodness will not soften into obedience; yet it seems reasonable to believe, that whenever the first and best of beings is pleased to send an extraordinary messenger, with a revelation of his will, he will furnish him with such proofs of his mission as may argue, not only the power of him in whose name he comes, but his love to men, and his inclination to do them good. And therefore we may be assured, that such, who would sanctify methods of cruelty and persecution, by pretences to a divine warrant and command, act not by commission from him who is the *father of mercies*, but by the instigation of that wisdom which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish*.

And

And in order that the proof may be yet more convincing, 'tis necessary that the things pretended to be miracles be done openly, in the eye of the world, and before many and proper witnesses; with that manifest sincerity, openness, and freedom which becomes a good man, and one acting by authority from God. As such a one can have no imposture to support, he can have no discovery to fear. The very reason of his doing miracles is, that others may be witnesses to them ; and he is therefore willing that his works may be tried, and that the strictest scrutiny may be made into them ; that others being convinced there is no fraud, may submit to the evidence of them. It is a bad sign, when persons so act as if they were suspicious of themselves, and afraid of a discovery ; when they choose to do their wonders, either with as much secrecy as thy can, or in the presence of but few witnesses, or those that are ignorant and unlearned persons ; and not so very able and likely to discover and find out the imposture.

And as they ought to be performed in the most open and publick manner,

so the more they are in number, of the greater force and evidence they will appear. One single action, tho' never so wonderful, would have but very little influence. Those that were witnesses to it, tho' they might at first be surprised at the unusual event, yet when the surprize was gone off, would give but little credit to such pretensions to a divine authority, that had no stronger proofs to support them. And as for others, they would either question the truth of the fact, or ascribe it to chance or fraud, or, indeed, any thing rather than a supernatural Assistance. In order to make any revelation of general use, and procure it universal reception, 'tis necessary that the first proofs of its being from God should be strong and evident, such as may be notorious and generally known; and that therefore the messengers of God, upon all important occasions, should have an abiding power with them of doing such wonderful works, as may argue the continuance of a divine influence, that none may be without sufficient evidence, or want proper proofs to convince them, that their

their mission and authority is from God.

And the proof from hence will be yet more convincing, if such persons have not only themselves a continued power of doing wonderful works, but also of enabling others to do the same, in confirmation of the same end. This will be a means of spreading the revelation itself farther, and making the proof of its divine original, more convincing and extensive. By this it will appear plain, that they are not done by collusion, or flight of hand, but by the interposition of some superior power, that continues to assist and support those that do them. And if such works are performed, not only for a few years, but for a great number successively, by different persons engaged in the same interest, and in support of the same scheme of principles ; this will be the strongest possible proof of its truth to those, that are witnesses to the facts themselves, and a sufficient reason for all others to believe it, in succeeding ages. Provided

In the last place, that there is such a testimony to these facts, as is sufficient

to prove the truth of them, or to render it very probable that they were actually performed. That past facts are capable of solid proof, I may take for granted, will not be denied; and therefore that the miracles wrought in favour of christianity, if they were actually performed, are capable of this proof as well as other things. And of consequence, if they are attended with an equal certainty, or probability, as other past facts, which the most cautious persons do firmly believe, the history of them will stand upon the same foot of evidence, and equally deserve our credit. If, indeed, there be not sufficient proof, that the miracles, we christians affirm to have been wrought in confirmation of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, ever were performed, I must confess my self ready prepared to fall in with the next scheme, that any of our modern deists can offer, that shall appear more worthy my belief, and to be supported with better proofs than the religion of the gospel. But . . .

II. There are some marks that respect the persons themselves, pretending to a divine authority and mission. It seems a necessary part of their character, that they should be in the full exercise of their reason and senses, since no man will think himself obliged to pay much regard to the dreams and visions of persons disordered in their brains, or who appear to be under the power of enthusiasm and melancholly ; and there is no reason to perswade us to believe, that God should make choice of madmen to deliver to the world the words of sobriety and truth. 'Tis necessary also, that they should generally appear to be honest and good persons, such who fear God, and have a good report for their unblameable and virtuous conversation. For, as the end of every revelation that comes from God, must be to establish the practice of virtue and true goodness, one cannot think, that in order to bring about such a design, he would make choice of persons that themselves contradicted it in their own behaviour. Others would argue from such persons practice, that they did

did not believe the instructions they gave, and that therefore they were not worthy any ones regard. I may add, under this head, that whoever would support the character of a prophet, must be constant and uniform to himself, not perpetually varying his messages, or altering his doctrines ; now forbidding what he once allowed, then allowing what he once forbad ; but that there must be an exact harmony and agreement in every thing that he delivers, let it be at never so great a distance of time, or upon ever so extraordinary an emergence : For as the supreme being cannot but be conscious to his own perfections and will, and understands the true interest and happiness of his creatures, 'tis as evident, that no person instructed of God can deliver opposite and contradictory messages, as that God cannot contradict himself, or be ignorant of his own purposes and resolutions. Hence we may learn what to judge of the pretensions of *Mahomet* to divine inspiration, whose messages to his followers were shaped and varied according to the different circumstances of his affairs, or the opposite ends he had

had to answer ; an evident proof that he acted not under his influence, who is *infinite in understanding*, but was a real impostor, pretending to an inspiration he had not ; as not being able either to foresee, or provide against future events. I proceed

III. Next, to enquire what are those particular ends, for which miracles must be wrought, in order to prove the interposition of the divine power, or the ministration of good spirits under God. That real wonders may be done by evil spirits, of natures superior to us, in opposition to the divine authority and government, I think I have already proved both from reason and scripture ; and therefore, the most proper and sure way to judge of, and to discover to whose power and influence to ascribe any miracles that are performed, is to examine what purposes are intended to be answered by them, or what doctrines and precepts they are wrought in confirmation of. Because no reasonable being can be supposed steadily to pursue an interest opposite to his own, or willingly to lend his assistance to support

port an authority, that must prove the destruction of his own influence and power.

It is therefore certain, that no miracles whatsoever, wrought in opposition to the principles of true reason, and natural religion, can be from God. There can be no greater impossibility in nature, than for the supreme being to commission any person to teach and perswade others that he doth not exist, or that there is no providence, or future state ; that there is no obligation to piety, justice, charity, and the government of our own passions. That God is, is as demonstrable as that we are. And since we have existence, there are certain duties that do naturally and necessarily result from our condition as creatures, and fellow creatures, the obligation of which doth not depend on the arbitrary will of God, but is founded in the reason and nature of things, and which therefore can never cease, 'till we ourselves cease to be ; or at least become other creatures than what we now are. And therefore we cannot be more sure of any thing than this, that no person, whose real design is to weaken the

the belief of these truths, or destroy the obligation of these duties, let his coming be with never so many signs and wonders, and miracles, can be the messenger of God.

Nor are his pretensions to a divine mission to be allowed, that would introduce a false object, or method of worship; the worship of more Gods than one, or such a method of worship, as is unsuitable to the nature and perfections of the one true God. For since 'tis demonstrable that the supreme being is but one, so that worship, which is due to him, is founded on reasons that are peculiar, and can belong to none but himself; his being the eternal, underived, independent one, the all-wise Creator, and preserver of all things, and therefore the greatest, and best, of all beings; and therefore he cannot act by warrant from God, that would persuade men to transfer this worship to any other beings whatsoever. Supposing then, that all the miracles, that *Damis* and *Philostratus* ascribe to *Apollonius*, were actually performed, yet will not all this secure him from the charge of imposture, because

cause he every where taught the worship of many Gods, and therefore could not be sent by the one only living and true God.

Nor can he be a messenger from heaven, that contradicts the proper design of any former revelation from God ; who either affirms of any preceeding divine revelation that God did not make it, or who opposes the plain doctrines, and real intention of such a revelation. God may indeed, at one season, appoint one particular method or form of external worship, as it may be proper to answer some special ends, or as may be peculiarly agreeable to a particular age or people ; and at another season, as the circumstances of time and nations may alter, command the use of religious rites, that shall bear no resemblance to the former. This is agreeable to the wisdom of the supreme governour, and doth not argue any defect or imperfection in him ; and therefore 'tis no reasonable objection against the character of any person, pretending to be sent of God, if other things answer, that he introduces a new method of external worship,

ship, that he abrogates many rites that may have been long in use, when the reason and design of them ceases, and commands the use of others never practised before, that are very significant and instructive. But should he attempt to disprove the truth, or doctrines of any former revelation, that was really from God, the very attempt would prove him a lyar, tho' he should perform never so many wonderful works, for his own support and vindication.

The proper design then, of every revelation that is really from God, must be, in short, this : To lead men into just and becoming sentiments of the divine being and perfections ; to direct and appoint that method of worship that will be acceptable to himself; to recover men from their ignorance, to reform them from their vices, and to lead them into the practice of virtue and true goodness, by proper motives and arguments ; for the general welfare of societies, every one's particular happiness in this life, and their preparation for a better world hereafter. Such a design as this seems to be worthy of the all-wise and merciful

gover-

governour of the world, and what we may expect from him who knows our infirmities, and wishes our happiness. And therefore, whenever the circumstances of mankind shall be such, as to need a particular interposition of his providence, for this end, there is nothing in reason that forbids us to expect it ; nor any thing in the nature of the case itself that may hinder him from doing it. But unless miracles are calculated to serve this end, they ought never to be acknowledged as any proof of a divine mission ; because we may certainly conclude, that God never will interpose in any cases where there is no need ; or to bring about a design unworthy of himself.

It may here possibly be asked, Is this good reasoning, to prove the miracles to be wrought by God, by appealing to the doctrines, or end for which they are wrought ; and then to prove the doctrines, or justify the end, by an appeal to the miracles ? I answer, That the very doing of a miracle argues the interposition, or assistance of some superior agent ; and that the end, for which

which such a miracle is done, evidently discovers the nature and disposition of that being, by whose influence it is performed. The doctrines prove, not the assistance of a superior power, but whether the assistance be given by a good or bad one: The miracles prove, not the goodness of the doctrine, but that he who preaches the good doctrine so confirmed, acts by an authority superior to his own. They neither of them, separately, prove the divine mission; but where they both concur, they certainly prove this proposition, That such a person acts by the authority of some superior, good, and powerful being; or in other words, that his mission is agreeable to the will of the Supreme.





C H A P. IV.

*The foregoing Marks applied to the Miracles of
C H R I S T.*

BT now remains, that we consider how these characters and marks may be applied to the christian revelation, to prove it to be from God. And inasmuch as all other circumstances will signify nothing, 'till we have first evinced the truth of the facts, we affirm to have been done, I shall begin with shewing, that we have sufficient evidence of the truth of the gospel history, and to believe all the facts there represented to be done by our Saviour and his apostles; that, as an history, 'tis equally credible with any other, and stands upon the same foot

foot of evidence as all other past accounts do. And I must observe, that it seems very reasonable to think, that there would be but little opposition made to the truth of our Saviour's history, as delivered by the writers of the *New Testament*, was it not that *Jesus Christ* pretends to a divine mission, and is declared to have proved it by many miracles. I do not find, that any of our modern deists scruple to believe, that the writings ascribed to that great *Indian* philosopher *Confucius*, were really his; or that the *Alcoran* was, in a great measure, dictated by *Mahomet*. As the former claims no inspiration, so the entire character of the latter abundantly proves him to have been an impostor; and therefore the writings, said to be theirs, are received as such, without cavil or dispute: Not that there is any better evidence for this, than there is to believe the writings of the *New Testament* to be theirs, whose names they bare; which have the very same concurrence of proof, as all antient books have, and against the genuineness of which no objections can be brought, but such as

will be of equal force against all others written in ancient times whatsoever.

For instance, should any one undertake to deny that the *Commentaries*, attributed to *Cæsar*, were his, and affirm that the accounts given of his victories and conquests is all fiction and romance, by what arguments is such a one to be convinced ? To prove the truth by certain demonstration none will, I suppose, attempt ; because past matters of fact are not, in their nature, capable of such a proof. *Cæsar* himself is not now alive to attest the books to be of his own penning ; nor are there any, who lived in *Cæsar's* time, that give that satisfactory account of him, or his writings, which is requisite. Some few there are that speak of him, and them, but in very general terms ; not mentioning many of the most considerable actions said to be done by him, nor reciting many of the books said to written by him. And as for those that do, possibly they might be his friends, and, from some personal interest and view, be compilers of the books, too credulously ascribed to him. Or if *Cæsar* wrote them himself, I will take

take upon me to deny the facts, and affirm, that his battles were fought nowhere but in his own brain, and that that they were meer inventions to aggrandise himself; and to secure a lasting memory and glory. Perhaps I shall be told, that there are many authors, of undoubted credit, who confirm these facts. I may however reply, that I have not the same opinion of them, and think them to be incompetent witnesses. Some of them lived near thirty or forty years after *Cæsar's* time, and so could not see the victories they ascribe to his valour and conduct; and they might all of them write, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, not out of regard to truth, but for the sake of serving a particular interest and design. Besides, there are some errors in these books, as to matters of fact, some narratives that are evidently false, others that appear to be fictitious, and about which learned men, all of them pretending to believe in, and admire *Cæsar*, cannot possibly agree. And indeed, supposing it could be fully proved, that *Cæsar* did write, heretofore, a book

called his *Commentaries*, here are so many things interpolated, other passages omitted, and so many various readings in those copies that now go under his name, that 'tis impossible to distinguish what is really his, from that which is not genuine. 'Till these difficulties are cleared up, I must be allowed to give but little credit to the story of *Cæsar*, or the *Commentaries* that go under his name. I must confess these, and the like, are very large suppositions; but it will be a very hard matter for a deist, upon his own principles, to convince a man of such a temper, or indeed, to prove the truth of any past facts whatsoever.

For this is really the case, as far as I can judge, of those who reject the christian revelation; their objections against the gospel history are founded upon such sort of suppositions, as I have now mentioned. Take the books of the *New Testament*, as a plain narrative of past events, and in this view I now only consider them, and they are supported by the very same sort of proofs, that any other ancient writings are,

are, or can be. That there was such a man as Jesus Christ, living in the Jewish nation, born when *Augustus Cæsar* was emperor, and crucified under the reign of *Tiberius*, is unanimously agreed on, by *Pagan*, *Jewish*, and *Christian* writers. 'Tis a fact never called into question by any ancient author whatsoever. The great question is, what sort of person this *Jesus* was. The accounts that are given of him by the writers of the *New Testament*, tho' they wrote in several places, and at the distance of many years, are entirely uniform. They all give the same plain narrative of his character, pretensions, doctrines, precepts, works, reception and end. They were almost all of them his contemporaries, and not only so, but some of them very intimately conversant with him, witnesses to the works they report he did, and who heard themselves the doctrines he delivered, and who declare that in their writings they spoke of nothing but what their eyes saw, and their ears heard; and to say all, who believed themselves under an absolute necessity, as they valued the favour of almighty

God, and their own eternal happiness, to deliver nothing but the truth. That they did write such books none have attempted to disprove. We have, in confirmation of it, the testimony of those who lived with them, who either quote from them passages, no where to be found but in their writings, or else cite them expressly by name. Their testimony others, that came after them, have received; and thus, from one to another, it hath been conveyed down to us, by an uninterrupted tradition, which is the very same reason, on which we believe that any other ancient writings are theirs, to whom they are attributed.

There have been indeed several things, gospels and epistles, that have been falsely ascribed to *Christ*, and his apostles; which either have no sufficient proof for their support, or which evidently prove themselves to be of a spurious and much later original. And possibly there may be some grounds for doubt, as to the authors, and time of writing, of one or two of the books of our present canon. But is this peculiar to the books of the *New Testament*? Or if this be a reason against

against others of them being genuine, will it not prove the same, in the case of every book, where the like objection can be fairly made? What then will become of some of the most celebrated and favourite authors, *Josephus*, *Virgil*, and many others that might be mentioned; some parts of whose writings lye under the very same uncertainty.

Besides, 'tis well worth considering, that none of the *New Testament* writers have ever been convicted of forgery and imposture. General charges have been laid, and hard names given, but nothing fairly made out. The most inveterate adversaries, of christianity have never pretended to give us a truer, and more consistent history of *Christ*, than what we have in the *New Testament*; nor upon any scheme to account for his miracles, supposing him an impostor, as consistent with the nature of that religion he came to establish. Immediately after his death, his disciples and followers proclaimed, wherever they went, the wonders and miracles that were wrought by him, whilst living; and gave such an account of the reasons of his ignominious sufferings, and death,

death, which, if true, was not only sufficient to wipe off the scandal of his cross, but to secure him an unperishable glory. If the accounts of the one and other were false, why did not the *Jews* give a publick authentick account of the imposture of Jesus and his disciples; such a just description of the life and character, of the frauds and vices of him whom they crucified, and his followers whom they persecuted, as might have been a sufficient vindication of the justice and honour of their own nation, and have cleared them from the charge, of having shed righteous and innocent blood? And this they ought to have done, not only in justice to themselves, but for the sake of others; to preserve them from being deceived by the imposture: And the more so, because the followers of Christ, not only spoke of these things, but delivered them in writing to the world, as the most certain truths, and sent these written accounts to the several churches they had gathered; and that even whilst many were living, who undoubtedly could have confronted their account, had it been false:

false ; and who had both craft and malice enough to have given us a truer one, if they had been able. Their not doing this, when the christians had neither power nor numbers to have destroyed the writings of their adversaries, give just reason to suspect, that they chose, rather to suffer the writings of the *New Testament* to pass without opposition, than to give a quite different account of things, which they were not able to support.

If there be any thing in these books, as to customs, chronology, persons, characters, or the like ; that evidence them to be of a later writing than we christians affirm, let it be fairly made out. This will be an objection not easily got over. Or if there be any proof, that they were not written by those, whose names they bare, or any just exceptions against their honesty, integrity, and capacity ; or if there was no concurrent testimony to the truth of what is asserted by the *New Testament* writers, such objections would weigh with all considerate persons, and be some just ground of exception.

But,

But, I do not find any material difficulties upon this head. The *Jewiſh* writers themselves give us the same account of the state of their nation, as we find in our sacred books. The *Phariſees* and *Sadduces*, with their particular tenets, and superstitious customs, are represented by *Josephus*, much in the same manner, as they are by *Christ* and his apostles. As to their subjection to the *Roman* power, their several governors, the time of their being sent, and the like, all authors, that speak of these things, confirm the truth of what the scriptures deliver concerning them. So that there is no charge, either of facts misplaced, or of persons and customs misrepresented, that can be brought against the scripture history, to render any part of it suspected, much less incredible.

As to the character of *Christ* and his apostles, there is nothing to be found to render it a thing improbable, that they should be sent of God; no opposition between their doctrines and lives, no tokens of fraud or juggle, that can give the least ground for any to imagine them wicked
and

and designing men. That they did many wonderful works, in order to prove themselves to be the messengers of God, their very adversaries have been forced to acknowledge ; tho', out of their hatred to their persons and doctrines, they maliciously ascribed them to the assistance of evil spirits, as the *New Testament* writers inform us ; which account we have the more reason to believe, because the same charge hath been brought against them by other authors. *Celsus* quoted by *Origen*, when pressed with the argument of our Saviour's miracles, doth not undertake to deny the facts, but accounts for them, by pretending, that he went into Ægypt, and there learnt the art of doing wonderful works.

Φησὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν σκότιον τερρόντα, μαθηρίσαντα, εἰς Ἀιγύπτιον, δυνάμειν τινων παρεχέντα, ὅπερεν ἐπανελθεῖν, Θεὸν δι' ἐκτίνας τὰς δυνάμεις ἔωντὸν ἀναγορέουσα. *Celsus* apud *Orig.* p. 30. And agreeable to this, he elsewhere faith, that some of his followers understood magical arts, and had a power of doing wonders by the invocation of certain spirits. Several also of the *Talmudick* writers affirm, that Christ was well versed

versed in magick. Others ascribe his wonderful works to the art he had in pronouncing the name *Jehovah*, which he learnt in the temple, having once, secretly, conveyed himself into the sanctuary, for this purpose. In a word, our Saviour's miracles were so well attested, that the ancient *Jews* themselves could not deny the facts ; but who, rather than acknowledge him as a prophet, on the account of them, imputed them to the most unlikely and ridiculous causes. Perhaps I should be thought over credulous, should I mention *Josephus*'s account of *Christ* ; and I therefore forbear to insist on it, not that I think the passage can be proved spurious, but because I would not lay any stress on matters, that have been the subject of doubt and question.

But we have not only the testimony of the *Jews*, but of many other unexceptionable witnesses ; who, tho' born of *Gentile* Parents, and educated in the religion of the heathens, yet, were so fully convinced of the truth of the miracles wrought by *Christ*, and his apostles, as that, upon the evidence of their being done,

done, and the consideration of the design they were intended to support, they embraced the religion he came to establish. I am aware that their evidence will be objected against, upon account of their being christians; but without reason. For I would ask, were they christians without conviction? Did they forsake the religious customs they had been bred up in, and embrace christianity, without having, what they at least apprehended to be, a solid proof of the truth of it? And was there any argument that could have convinced them of the truth of Jesus Christ's pretensions, but a faithful, well attested account of his doctrines, life, and miracles? And is the testimony of persons convinced by such an account any thing the worse, merely because they apprehended the evidence to be irresistible, and therefore yielded to conviction? This is to reject their testimony, for that which is the best reason in the world to receive it, *viz.* their being fully convinced that his miracles were real, and then acting agreeable to such a belief. We must not be put off here with this easy objection, that they were

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all weak and credulous persons ; as tho' every *pagan* and *infidel* must be a *very wise and discerning* person, merely on account of his infidelity ; and every *christian* an *idiot and fool*, because convinced of the truth of christianity. Tho' in the early ages of the church, there were many weak and imprudent christians, as there are now many empty conceited infidels, yet there were others who, besides the advantage of good natural parts, had been educated under the most celebrated philosophers, and brought up in all the literature of those times ; and who were every way capable of discerning the frauds and impostures of the first preachers of the gospel, had there been any ; who yet saw the evidence for the truth of christianity to be so strong, as that they could not resist it ; but rather chose to sacrifice all that was valuable to them in this world, and even life itself, than renounce a religion that was attended with so many wonderful proofs of its divine original. Had any one amongst the heathens stood up in opposition to christianity, and openly professed himself so fully convinced of its being an imposture,

imposture, as that he would rather choose to dye than embrace it, and at last, seal this confession of his infidelity with his blood, how would they have extolled his honesty, judgment, courage, and resolution ; and what mighty monuments of praise would they have erected to his memory ? But, such is their great impartiality, that tho' thousands have given their testimony in favour of Christ and his religion, and rather yielded to death, than to renounce him ; men bred up in all the superstitious rites of idolatrous worship, and who living when first christianity began to spread, had all the opportunities in the world of discovering the weakness and defects of it ; yet this *cloud of witness* deserves no credit, and weighs nothing with those mighty masters of, and pretenders to reason.

But however, if the testimony of the professed friends of christianity signifies nothing, we have some farther concurrent proof, from the acknowledgment of its avowed adversaries. *Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian*, by calling our Saviour a magician, plainly

own the wonderful works we ascribe to him. Julian faith of him, Ἐργασίων θεοῖς τῶν αὐτοῖς ἀξιῶν εἰ μή τις οἴτης τῆς κυριᾶς καὶ τυφλῶν ιδόσαθαι καὶ δαμονῶντας ἐφορκίζειν ——— οἵ μεγίστων ἔργων εἶναι. Apud Cyril. p. 191. That he did nothing worthy any regard, unless you will account his healing the lame and blind, and casting out devils, to be very extraordinary works. Hierocles also, another inveterate adversary to christianity, not pretending to deny the facts of our Saviour's miracles, opposes the wonders of *Apollonius Tyanaeus*, as equal, and even superiour to those of Christ. Thus he blames the christians for their levity, in rejecting *Apollonius*, whilst at the same time, upon account of some few wonderful things that Christ did, they owned, and worshipped him as God. Διὰ δὲ λιγίας τερατείας τινὰς τὸν Ἰησὸν θεὸν ἀναγορέουσι. Apud Euseb. p. 512. And again, σεμιτίντες τὸν Ἰησὸν ως τυράννοις ἀναβλέψας τε παρασχόντα, καὶ τινὰ τοιαῦτα δεσπότατα θαυμάσια. Ibid. i. e. worshipping Jesus, because he made the blind to see, and did some other such wonders. In the same strain they also speak of the apostles. Julian faith of Paul, τὸν πάντας πανταχοῦ

τὰς πώποτε γόντας καὶ ἀτατεῶντας ὑπερβαλλόμενον
Παῦλον. Apud Cyril. l. 3. p. 100. *That he did exceed all the other juglers and cheats that ever were ; and the same charge they endeavour to fasten upon others of them.* In a word, friends and adversaries agree in the facts, tho' they impute them to different causes ; nor is there any one single testimony, from any approved ancient author, that can be produced by those, who deny the account we have in scripture of our Saviour's miracles, in support of their infidelity in this matter ; or that so much as tends to convict the *New Testament* writers of falsehood and forgery. So that thus far they act a part inconsistent with themselves, as well as with common sense, who reject the history of the gospel, and yet believe the truth of other histories, that are supported by no other or better proofs.

To this it may be objected by some, that they do believe the history of the *New Testament* writers, as far as 'tis credible, equally, and upon the same foot of evidence, as they believe the histories written by other persons, as far as they are credible, or

worthy of belief; but that there may be particular things recorded by historians, which, tho' they do not weaken the credit of the history in general, yet may be liable to very great exception, and unworthy the belief of any reasonable and inquisitive person. Thus there is great reason to believe the history of *Livy* in general to be true, because of the concurrent testimony of other *Roman* authors. But that, as *Livy* reports, *A cow should speak, l. 3. c. 10. that it should rain flesh, and that the birds should immediately devour it.* *Ibid. That an infant, in its mother's womb should cry out, Io triumphe, and that a woman should be turned into a man at Spoleto, l. 24. c. 10.* are things incredible in themselves, and not to be regarded by any but weak and superstitious persons. And thus, that there was such a man as Jesus Christ, who lived in *Augustus Cæsar's* time, and did, and said a great many good things, they are very ready to own. But that he did the miracles recorded of him, they think very unlikely; and therefore disbelieve them, for the same reason that they do those miracles

racles recorded by other authors, because in themselves incredible.

But in answer to this, let it be considered, that a thing is then only incredible, either when the thing, said to be done, is in itself impossible, or when there can be no just reason assigned for the doing it. That the miracles of Christ are not impossible, is very evident, upon the supposition of their being done by God, or beings superior to us, under him. And that they were done for a very wise and valuable end, is evident from the nature and tendency of the gospel revelation, which they were wrought to establish; which could not have been so well known to have proceeded from God without them; and which would not have been effectual to reform and save men, unless attended with sufficient proofs of its divine original. I allow therefore, that our Saviour's miracles would be perfectly incredible, was there no great and valuable end to be answered by them. But as they were wrought in confirmation of the most excellent religion, it appears worthy of God to permit, and even assist in the performance of them,

are therefore so far from being incredible, that they are highly worthy our belief. The facts that are reported by *Livy*, are liable to very just exception, because there doth not appear any solid reason, why such extraordinary events should come to pass. But since the facts recorded in the *New Testament* are not liable to the same objection, there is not the same reason for suspecting the truth of them. Besides, as to the extraordinary facts related by *Livy*, there doth not appear that concurrent testimony which is necessary to render them credible, nor was he himself a witness to the things he reports. Whereas the persons who relate the miracles of our blessed Saviour, speak of nothing but what they saw and heard: And the same number of witnesses, that give us an account of the doctrines taught by *Christ*, unanimously concur in baring testimony to his works. So that there is, in reality, the same reason for believing that he did the works, as that he taught the doctrines ascribed to him. Whether these miracles were done by the power of magick, or by the finger
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of God, remains now to be enquired into; or, which is the more probable account, that given us by *Julian, Hierocles*, and others; or that which we have from the authors of the books of the *New Testament*.

And here are two things, which at first view, render the account given in our sacred writings, the more probable.

1. That the penmen of them were more proper, and competent judges, than those who gave the contrary account; because they spake of things they were witnesses to, and therefore understood the manner, circumstances, and design of the facts they relate. It is true, that many of the *Jews*, who lived in our Saviour's time, and saw his miracles, yet said, that he cast out devils by the prince of devils; and imputed his wonderful works to a confederacy with evil spirits. But nothing is more evident, than that they had entertained the strongest possible prejudices against him, because he answered not their expectations of a temporal deliverance, which

they imagined the Messiah would have wrought out for them; and reproved, with a great deal of freedom, the hypocrisy, ignorance, pride, avarice, and other vices, of the principal men of that nation, who had gained a mighty reputation for wisdom and sanctity. Tho' he had all the characters and marks of a prophet, according to the description of their own sacred writings; tho' they admired, and were forced to acknowledge the excellency and truth of his doctrines; tho' there was the same reasons for believing in him, as in any of the preceeding prophets, whom they received; tho' he gave them the very proofs of his mission from God, which they demanded, yet rather than own him in his proper character, they ascribe these proofs to the power of devils, and traduce him as an impostor and seducer of the people. Had he been a flagitious impious man, they could easily have made it appear, and this would have rendered the account of his confederacy with devils the more likely. Or had they imputed the miracles of the preceeding prophets to the fanatic influence

ence, and equally rejected them, they would have acted a consistent part. But to receive them as the messengers of God, upon the evidence of miracles they never saw, and yet to impute the much greater and more numerous miracles of Christ, to which they were witnesses, to the power of evil spirits, discovers a mind very strongly prepossessed, and the great force and influence of prejudice. Besides, the testimony of these persons is confronted by that of others, who appear to be altogether as credible witnesses. Thus we find, that the generality of those, who saw with what power Christ cast out devils, at the same time that the *Pharisees* imputed it to the assistance of the prince of devils, wondering, and frankly acknowledging, * *It was never so seen in Israel, i. e.* no prophet ever arose, that had so absolute a power over evil spirits as this man. And in another place, after he had restored the blind and dumb to his sight and speech, when the *Pharisees* laid the same blasphemous charge, the people were amazed,

zed, and so far from thinking as the *Pharisees* did, that they immediately own him for their Messiah, saying, * *Is not this the son of David?* A like acknowledgment was made him, upon his wonderful calming the raging wind and sea, || *Of a truth thou art the son of God.* Thus also 'tis reported of great multitudes, that when they saw the dumb spake, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind receiving sight, † *They glorified the God of Israel,* which surely they would not have done, had they thought that Christ was an impostor, or his cures performed by the power of devils. And even, as to the *Pharisees* and rulers themselves, the same records inform us, that many of them believed in *Christ*, but had not courage to acknowledge it, *|| *for fear they should be put out of the Synagogue.* Some of them indeed, made a publick profession of their faith in him, as *Nicodemus*, *Jairus*, ||† and others. So that their censures of the *Scribes*

* Mat. xiii. 23. || Ibid. xiv. 33. † Ibid. xv. 31.
† Joh. xii. 42. ||† Joh. iii. 2.

Scribes and *Pharisees* are of no credit in this case, because others of them, and indeed the generality of the *Jewish* nation believed him to be a prophet, on the account of his miracles; and would even have received him as the *Messiah*, had they not been prevented by the power and craft of their teachers and rulers.

But with much less reason still, can *Celsus*, *Julian*, and others, bring this charge against *Christ*, that he performed his miracles by the help of magick. If those, who were his contemporaries, were not, with all their malice, able to support it, 'tis not to be imagined, that those, who came so long after him, should be furnished with better proofs of it. They themselves acknowledge many of the facts, and did they discern any thing of fraud, or any one circumstance, that might give just suspicion of imposture and magick art? If they allow the interposition of a superior power, as *Julian* doth, the best way to know, whether he be a good or bad one, is, not to rely on the bare testimony of friend or foe, but to consider the circumstances of the works themselves, the character
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of him that doth them, and the end they are wrought in favour of. Here then we joyn issue with our adversaries, that Christ, and his apostles, in his name, did heal the lame, and blind, and cast out devils, by their word; and farther, that they could not have done this, without the assistance of some superiour good or evil being. But then, what one single circumstance is there, that should induce us to credit *Celsus*, and *Julian*, and others of that sort, whose strong aversion to christianity, and the author of it, is abundantly evident, rather than *Matthew* and *John*, and the other *New Testament* writers, whose history of Christ appears to be a plain artless narrative of things, they themselves both saw and heard. Have they, after all their cavils, proved our Saviour, in any part of his character, a bad man, a friend to vice, or an enemy to truth? If to recover men from the worship of many Gods, to the worship of the one only living and true God; if to secure the practice of moral duties, by the strongest motives; if to establish the belief of a providence, and the certainty of rewards and punishment.

punishments, in another life, hath any tendency to promote an evil design, or can any possible way be subservient to the interest of evil spirits, I will then readily confess, that *Christ* might be an impostor, and his works performed by the influence of devils. And therefore, 'till the adversaries of christianity can produce some better witnesses, or circumstances, than they have yet done, to support such a charge, or can prove that the christian religion hath not such a tendency, or can reconcile this manifest contradiction, of an evil spirit's constantly pursuing a good end; for any to ascribe all the wonderful works of *Christ*, to the powers of magick, or confederacy with devils, is, I cannot help thinking, an argument of great credulity, or obstinate wickedness. But then,

2. If the *New Testament* account of *Christ* be true, his entire character will appear consistent, and of a piece; if not, full of the greatest possible contradictions in nature. That a righteous and good man should be sent of God to reform the world, that he should do many

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wonderful works of goodness, to confirm his divine authority and mission; that a person should lead a sober, righteous, and godly life, and teach others the practice of righteousness and virtue, by his own example and precepts, upon the principles of rewards and punishments in another life; that he should be reproached and persecuted by bad men, and die in confirmation of his character and doctrines, with great confidence and trust in God; and that a great deal of good should, by a wise and gracious providence, be brought out of this instance of wickedness and cruelty, these are all consistent suppositions, and very far from being incredible or unaccountable. But that a person should pretend to a mission from God, himself conscious, at the same time, that he really had none; that in order to confirm such false pretensions, he should impose on the world tricks and juggles, known to be such, as genuine miracles, or perform them by a willing confederacy with devils; that in such circumstances he should lead himself an exactly regular life, and steadily prosecute this one great design, the good of men, and the honour

honour of the supreme being ; that he should inculcate the necessity of universal goodness on others, and in particular the obligations of justice, honesty, and of every man's speaking the truth to his neighbour ; that he should teach the doctrines of God's providence, of a future state, and of eternal rewards and punishments, as the consequence of mens actions, according as they have been good or evil ; that he should deny himself all those worldly advantages, which one would think it must be the great design of an imposture to secure, and willingly expose himself to death for the support of it, and at the same instant, when he was expiring upon such an account, called God his father, and with the greatest assurance and ease, commend his departing spirit into his hands ; that a known, obstinate, hardened impostor, should thus live, and thus die, is one of the most monstrous and improbable suppositions in the world ; and to believe these things, as all must do, who reject the christian religion, argues much greater weakness and forwardness of faith, than can be charged on any for their believing the doctrines of the gospel. But

But not to insist on arguments of such a general nature, if we consider the whole behaviour of our blessed Lord, we shall not find one single mark of an imposture, or the least suspicion of a confederacy with devils.

1. As to the miracles affirmed to be done by him, none of them can be accounted at all impossible, upon the supposition of the real assistance of a superior being. Whether or no angels, by their own natural powers, can effect the wonderful works ascribed to *Jesus Christ*, I know not, and will not pretend to determine. What degrees of power the great and wise Creator hath furnished them with is to us a secret, and therefore what effects they can, or cannot produce, we should not be over hasty to pronounce. In the scriptures of the *Old Testament*, there are many instances that may naturally induce us to believe, that their power is very extraordinary, and that they can produce many effects, which would be as surprizing to us, and as much out of the common course of things, as most, if not any of our Saviour's miracles.

cles. But however, 'tis not material to our present argument, to determine in this case. Nothing is more certain, than that these things are not above the power of the first cause, and supreme being. The same God, that first formed the eye, can restore the blind his sight ; he, that wrought the whole frame of our bodies, could as easily cure the maimed, and heal the diseased ; he, that causes the rain to descend, and to water the earth, that it may produce the various kinds of herbs and fruits, and minister bread to the eater, and seed to the sower, could not be at a loss to change water into wine, or to multiply the loaves and fishes, for the relief of a fainting hungry multitude. That the former effects are owing to the wisdom, power, and providence of God, no sober and considerate Theist will deny ; and therefore I think they must allow the possibility of his effecting the latter.

Nor are these things only possible in themselves, but also very probable ; or such as are fit for, and worthy of him, who is the greatest and best of beings, to do. If indeed we suppose that the

miracles of *Jesus Christ* were performed by the interposition and influence of evil spirits, they will appear extreamly improbable ; nothing being more unsuitable to such a character, than that they should do, for so long a while, such numerous acts of beneficence, kindness, and charity to men. But that God should have compassion on his creatures, and exercise his tender mercies over the works of his hands, is no more surprizing, than that he should be infinitely good and wise. Indeed all the miracles recorded of our blessed Lord, and which he ascribes to the power and influence of his Father, are entirely agreeable to all his known perfections. The raising the dead, and creating bread for the hungry, and limbs for the maimed, are works both of power and of mercy ; and therefore agreeable to the wisdom of the supreme governour ; since they naturally tended both to beget reverence in the minds of men towards his messenger, and reconcile them to the belief, and obedience his of will.

These works were done in the most open and publick manner. Thousands were

were witnesses to the facts themselves ; even many of those, that could have discovered the imposture, had there been any, and that would have rejoiced at the opportunity. I might mention many instances of this kind. Thus * he cleansed the leper in the view of the multitude. He healed the centurion's servant, and *Peter's* wives mother, and calmed the tempest, before many † witnesses. He raised the ruler's daughter to life before the whole company, that were present to attend her funeral ||. He miraculously fed four thousand men, beside women and children *||; and at another time he as wonderfully entertained five thousand at his table ||†. In a word, so far was our blessed Lord, or his apostles, from seeming to have a desire of privacy, that they chose the most publick places, in which to perform their wonderful works ; that so the greater number might be witnesses to the truth and reality of them.

Add to this, that they were as extraordinary for their number, as they were

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* Mat. viii. 1. &c. † Ibid. || Chap. ix.
 *|| Chap. 15. † Mar. vi. 34. &c.

in their own nature ; and therefore manifested an abiding power in him that did them. One of his apostles tells us, *that many other things Jesus did, besides those he had recorded of him, the which if they should be written every one, even the * world itself would not contain the books which should be written, i. e.* they were so very numerous, as that they would appear almost incredible ; and hence 'tis accounted by another, as that which renders the neglect of the gospel salvation exceeding dangerous, *in that it was † confirmed with divers signs and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* Had he done but very few extraordinary actions, there might have been some suspicion for fraud. But when almost every day and hour produced some fresh instances of his power and goodness ; in works so publickly wrought, and so frequently done, if they had been all cheat and juggle, something of it must one time or other have appeared, and discovered itself ; for all times, and places, and company were

* Joh. xxi. 25.

† Heb. ii. 7.

were alike to him, and wherever he came he caused the multitude to marvel, and to glorify God, *for that such things were done in Israel*; and to acknowledge and believe in him, as the promised Messiah, because, * when ever he should come, it was impossible he could do more miracles than Jesus did.

And as for his disciples, they also had many of them the same power imparted to them, of casting out devils, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, in the time of our Saviour's ministrations upon earth; men who, upon account of their education, employments, and natural parts, were the most unlikely persons in the world, either to be taught, or to practice magick arts; and who were of such different tempers and passions, as that they could not have kept an imposture secret, nor united so firmly together, as was necessary to their carrying it on with any tollerable success. One of them we find deserted the cause, and treacherously delivered up his master to the Jews. Now, as he had been witness

to our Saviour's works, why did he not publickly expose him, had he known them to have been no better than tricks and juggles, or to have been performed by the invocation and assistance of evil spirits. This would have fully justified his conduct in delivering him up to the just resentments of an abused and injured people. But so far was it from this, that upon our Saviour's condemnation, he returns the price of his treachery, with this confession, * *I have betrayed innocent blood.* And notwithstanding the vehement accusations of the Jews, of his being an impostor, and seducer of the people, Pilate, the Roman governor, declares publickly, that after having examined him, † he finds no fault in him, as touching the things whereof he was accused. Surely had he been such a notorious vile perverter of the people, as they represented him, they might easily have fastened some probable circumstances of guilt on him, or his disciples, to have given some tolerable face at least to their prosecution and condemnation of him.

him. But as they could not prove the charge of imposture on *Christ*, and his disciples, whilst he was with them, so neither could they on them, after he was departed from them ; who, soon after his resurrection, spoke, with the greatest freedom, languages they had never heard or studied ; and, in the name of *Jesus*, cured the lame, and healed the sick, and raised the dead, and cast out devils ; which power, in greater or lesser degrees, continued many years in the Church. *Origen* against *Celsus*, speaking of the spirit of God, tells us,

"Ετι ὁ χριστὸς τὴν ἀγίαν ἐκείνην πνεύματος — παρὰ χριστὸν αὐτοῖς σωζεται. Ἐξεπάδεσσι δαιμόνων καὶ πολλὰς ιάσεις ἐπιτελεῖσι, καὶ ὄρῶσ' τινα κατὰ τὸ βέλημα τὴν λόγῳ περὶ μελλόντων.

Cont. Cels. p. 34. i. e.

Some footsteps of this holy spirit remain even to this day amongst christians, who cast out devils, and perform many cures, and foresee some future events, according to the will of *Christ*. We have also the testimony of *Tertullian* to this purpose, who speaks of the casting out of devils, and the healing of diseases by christians, as a thing notorious and common ; *Quanti honesti viri* (*de vulgariibus enim non dicimus*) *aut a dæmoniis*,

aut valetudinibus remediati sunt. Ad Scap. in init. Vid. etiam Apologet. & alibi. and that not only as to the more common and ordinary sort of people, but those also of the higher and more honourable stations of life ; the providence of God being pleased to continue this wonderful power, 'till christianity was so fully established, as to need no farther proof to confirm it. Had these publick testimonies been false, they could easily have been confronted and disproved. So that as to the works themselves ascribed to *Christ*, there is no one circumstance that can reasonably induce us to think them performed by an impostor or magician.

2. Nor *secondly*, if we consider the character of *Christ* and his apostles, shall we have reason to think any otherwise, than that their works were real miracles, performed according to the will and power of God. That they were in full possession of their reason and sens, the nature of their doctrines, the excellency of their precepts, their speeches, their apologies, in a word, their whole

whole conduct is an abundant proof. That they were good and holy men appears from every part of their history. They not only reproved others for their vices, but carefully avoided the same themselves, and were examples to all men of the virtues they recommended to their practice. The manifest design of their discourses and epistles is to recommend the fear of the supreme being, the love of justice and charity, and sobriety, and temperance in reference to our selves. And of these things they were patterns as well as preachers; and had no secret vices, that were ever fastened on them, that could cause men to suspect, either their mission from God, or their own belief of the doctrines they taught.

Add to this, that there is an entire harmony and agreement between all the first publishers of christianity, in every part of their scheme. *Christ* himself, during his ministration on earth, was in every thing consistent with himself; never varying his doðrines, nor shaping his religion according to unforeseen particular circumstances; allowing no criminal liberties, nor gratifying any

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of the sinful passions of men, either to gain himself friends, or to proselyte them ; but taught one scheme of doctrine, virtue and goodness, from the beginning to the end of his publick ministrations, without regard to mens characters or persons, or consulting his own safety or ease. And after his death, his apostles, tho' scattered in several nations, taught unanimously the same truths, and established the same method and form of religion, wherever they came. Whatever opposition and difficulties they met with, they still continued firm to the principles of their great Master, and consistent with each other. Their arguments, their defences, their exhortations, their principles of action, their motives to virtue, their rewards and punishments they set before men, their behaviour to their enemies, and, in a word, their entire conduct, was always, and every where the same. They none of them set up for themselves, nor divided into parties, nor wrought counter miracles, in opposition to each other ; but had all the same end in view, and every where prosecuted it by the same means. Shall

it be said, that this was done by concert with each other? This will appear highly incredible, because they travelled into the most distant countries, where they could not consult with each other upon any present emergence. Or shall it be said, that they received their instructions from *Christ* before his death, and so fixed their scheme before they parted from *Jerusalem*, and bound themselves to follow it wherever they came? But is it not the most unlikely thing in nature, that they could fix any one scheme, upon the supposition that they knew christianity to be an imposture, that could possibly suit all the circumstances of time and place, where they might happen to come? Or, if they were wicked enough willingly to support a known imposture, what could so zealously attach them to the interest of *Christ*, after his crucifixion? Why should they not rather assume the character of the Messiah, every one for himself? Especially, since the name of *Christ* was every where hated, and evil spoken of; and they were sure to have no other advantage in this world by their adherence to him, but contempt, ~~re-~~ proaches,

proaches, persecutions, and cruel death; and because there was some possibility they might have a more favourable reception than he had ; at least, they were certain they could not have a worse; no, nor worse than they had all the reason in the world to expect, by continuing to preach in his name.

But however, supposing there was such a scheme laid, and such a firm combination between some of the apostles, yet I would ask, how is St. *Paul's* conduct, his uniformity of principle and practice with theirs, to be accounted for? He was once zealously attached to the *Jewish Religion*, and in great reputation with their leading principal men. What were the motives of so wonderful a change? Did he exchange the religion of his forefathers, and all the circumstances of honour and plenty that attended the profession of it, for a known imposture, merely for the shame and scandal, and persecutions that attended it? Or was the change from some supernatural effect, or the fruit of real conviction? How then came he instructed in magick arts, in common with the rest of the apostles? Or was he an honest

next man when he became a convert to christiany, and afterwards fell into all the vile measures of tricks and forgeries to support it? How came he so soon after this change, to have such a perfect understanding of the nature of christianity, as to be able to direct, settle, and establish churches, wherever he came? As for *Christ* himself, he never received any instructions from him in person, whilst he was on earth, having never seen him here. And as for his apostles, he protests, in the presence of God, that he did not receive the gospel from them, nor was taught it by them; that he did not go to the apostles at *Jerusalem*, 'till three years after his conversion, and that then he saw but one of them, which was *Peter*, *Gal.* i. 12, 17, 18, 19. If this be so, how shall we account for it, that in so many epistles, wrote at such different times, to such different people, and upon questions of so great difficulty and importance, not one single expression should appear contrary to the doctrines taught by *Christ*, or the nature of the religion he intended to establish; and this before the history of our Saviour's life was published

lished by any of the evangelists, or at least probably fallen into his hands; and when he could not consult any of the apostles how to behave himself, or what instructions were most proper to be given to others? How could there, in such circumstances, have been so exact and universal an agreement in doctrines, precepts, motives, and the like, between *Paul* and the rest of the apostles, unless they all acted under the influence of one, and the same infallible guide?

Such was the real character of the persons employed to propagate the religion of *Jesus Christ*; a religion that deserved all their regards and cares, and that 'twas worth their while to suffer shame and persecution for the sake of; a religion worthy the first publication of the Son of God, and of that extraordinary confirmation by signs and wonders, and miracles of the *Holy Ghost*. The great design of christianity is to establish the belief of a God, and his providence; and a future state of rewards and punishments: To teach us the spiritual nature of God, and that the worship of the heart and spirit is most

most acceptable to him: To recover men from their idolatry, and bring them back to the worship of the one only living and true God: To teach men their duty to each other, and oblige them, by the strongest motives, to observe and practice whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, and virtuous, and praiseworthy; and to persuade them to mortify every inordinate affection, and evil habit within themselves, and to attain to those excellent dispositions of mind, by which they may resemble God, become most useful in life, and be best prepared for future happiness. In a word, to establish the practice of these two great duties, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, upon these two excellent principles; that of faith in God, as a rewarder of those that seek him; and faith in *Jesus Christ*, as the Saviour and judge of men. This is the evident tendency of the gospel of *Christ*; the doctrines it requires us to believe are reasonable in themselves, and as far as I can find, generally plain and easy enough to be understood; its precepts founded in

in the reason and nature of things, and answerable to the several relations we stand in towards God and one another ; and its promises suitable to his character, who is the greatest and best of beings, and able to inspire with hope and courage in the most difficult part of duty ; and all of these having this one main tendency, to make men better in themselves, more useful to others, and more acceptable to God.

In its main principles it agrees with that former revelation, which God made of himself by *Moses*, and the succeeding prophets. It indeed supplies the defects, and abolisheth all that was ceremonial, and typical in that imperfect dispensation. It carries the duties of men to a much nobler height, and establishes the practice of them by more solid and excellent motives. But as for its main doctrines, relating to the nature and perfections of God, the character and undertakings of the Messiah, the preferableness of moral duties to ceremonial observances, virtue's being acceptable to God, and sin the object of his hatred and displeasure, in these things, and the like, both testaments
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unanimously concur. So that as the external evidence for christianity is very strong, so neither can there be any internal marks produced from its own nature and contexture, to prove it the invention of crafty and evil men, and not a real revelation from God.

I will not pretend to answer for all the doctrines of christianity, as they have been represented and laid down in particular schemes and systems of faith. Let the compilers of them, and the believers in them defend, if they can, their truth, and their consistency with reason and scripture. When I speak of christianity, I mean that venerable ancient christianity, that is so evidently contained in the writings of *Jesus Christ* and his apostles; christianity in its plain native simplicity; not as it hath been dressed, and adulterated by the jargon and cant language of fathers, schoolmen, systematick and polemical divines, and stretched or squeezed, in order to make it tally with a shorter or longer confession and creed. In this plight it doth not appear so lovely and amicable a

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thing, as in its own native plaines, unadorned, and in those easy and familiar words, in which the sacred writers, under the influence of the blessed spirit, have represented it. As for many of those mysterious things, wherein some seem to place the whole essence of the christian religion, I shall not attempt to defend what I understand not. As for the plainer matters of the gospel, its principal precepts, and main doctrines to support the practice of them, I think it may be demonstrated, that they are founded in the reason and nature of things, consistent with the known perfections of God, and evidently conducive to promote the welfare of nations, and the present and future happiness of every particular person. So that I conclude, that as there is nothing in the nature of the christian religion, that hath the least tendency to prove its being an imposture, but, on the contrary, is calculated to serve the noblest ends and purposes; so its being confirmed by such wonderful works, by miracles so numerous and great, sufficiently argues its divine original;

ginal; and that therefore it carries with it an indispensable obligation on all men, who are capable of understanding the nature of that evidence on which it is founded, both to believe and obey it.

F I N I S.





A N
A N S W E R
T O A
L A T E B O O K

Entituled,

*A Discourse of the Grounds
and Reasons, &c.*

By SAMUEL CHANDLER.



L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year, M DCC XXIV.





INTRODUCTION.

FTER I had finished the preceeding discourse on miracles, I thought it could be no ways improper to annex to it, some considerations, in answer to a late book, entitled *A discourse of the grounds and reasons of the christian religion*; and the rather, because the author of it hath been pleased to assert, that miracles are of no use to prove the truth of christianity; which I hope, I shall make appear, that he is not able to maintain. As the author of this performance hath not thought fit to own

his name, I shall not pretend to guess who he is ; but cannot help saying, that in controversies of such a nature, as no wise man should write without having impartially considered matters, so no honest man should be ashamed, or afraid to own his sentiments, as publickly as he endeavours to propagate them. 'Tis our peculiar happiness under the present government, that no person hath any reason to apprehend any molestation, upon account of his particular opinions and speculations in matters of religion ; and I am firmly perswaded, that every one hath both a natural right to judge for himself, and to own and defend his principles as openly as he pleases, provided it be done with temper and good manners ; inasmuch as the cause of God and truth can never suffer by fair debate, and the most strict and impartial enquiry.

The adversaries of the christian Faith have made frequent insinuations, that they have unanswerable objections against our religion, had they but the liberty of publickly stating and defending them. I cannot but think that this liberty should be freely allowed them ; and heartily

heartily wish, for their farther assistance, we could recover the ancient writings of *Celsus*, *Julian*, *Porphyry*, and others the great opposers of the christian religion, that we might know how strong their cavils and objections were; because no considerate christian hath, I believe, any farther regard to *Jesus Christ*, than as he thinks him the messenger of God, or for the religion he taught, than as he apprehends it agreeable to truth. For my own part, I should be sincerely pleased to see all their objections stated in their strongest light, that I might the better understand, whether or no my profession and hopes, as a christian, are built on any solid and reasonable foundation. If our modern deists can fairly make christianity appear to be an imposture, I shall readily part with it; if they cannot, all their objections against it will but the more firmly establish its divine Authority.

'Tis however highly requisite, that controversies of this nature should be managed with great moderation, and regard to decency and truth. Passion and

and prejudice, unfair misrepresentations and injurious charges, banter and ridicule, how much soever abounding in other controversies, are certainly very improper in this; where the great debate is, which is the most certain way to virtue and happiness in this life, and to the more substantial and durable blessedness of another. I am sorry I am forced to say this of the author I am now considering, that he seems to have thought himself under no obligations to observe any of the rules of decency whatsoever, or of paying that strict regard to truth, which becomes a reasonable and an honest mind. His whole performance, tho' pretended as *a proof of christianity*, hath no other view than to expose it as *a weak and groundless thing*, and seems to be designed as an insult on the author and first publishers of it. His sneer at St. Paul, for that passage, *Gal. iv. 21, &c. p. 11.* his putting the mission of *Mahomet, Zoroaster, the incarnate deities of the Siamese and Brachmans, and Jesus Christ* upon the same foundation, *p. 23.* his making the *prophets of the Old Testament,*

ment to get their livelihood by discovering lost goods and telling fortunes, p. 29. his ascribing the establishment of christianity to a rabbi, and the protestant religion to the devil, p. 61. are several instances of his regard to decency and good manners. His making *the Old Testament the sole proof of christianity*, and *the Old Testament writings the only canon of scripture to christians*; his witty assertion, that *christianity is not plain christianity, but mystical Judaism*; that many of the Jews believed *in the gospel before 'twas published*, and were as much christians as those converted by the apostles, p. 15. his citing texts of scripture, which evidently prove the contrary of what they are cited to prove, p. 29. So. are, out of many, some few specimens of his great integrity, and love to truth. Such dishonest and unfair practices as these shew, not the weakness of christianity, but the spite and ill nature of its adversaries; and inclines me the more to think, that the cause of infidelity is not founded on truth, because of the mean arts that are made use of to support it.

I think my self however obliged, on this occasion, to acknowledge what I believe to be true, that there are, amongst those gentlemen, who, as I think, are so unhappy as to disbelieve christianity, some, who would scorn the little methods the author I am considering hath taken, to expose a religion he plainly appears not to understand, or wilfully to have misrepresented ; and that have honour enough to despise the man that makes use of them ; and that tho' I charge this writer with several gross immoralities, upon account of his manner of writing, yet that I am far from fixing the like charge of immorality upon others, merely because they have not the same honourable sentiments of christianity with those, who see reason to believe it ; as hath been too often, and, I think, unfairly done. Nothing is more unjust, than that the vices of particular men, in any body or society, should be charged on the whole. Christians would not like such a treatment from others, and they should therefore be as sparing in giving it, as they would be unwilling to receive it.

Sure I am, that as christianity needs no such methods to support it ; so that it hath but little to fear from such performances as I am now to consider ; whatever opinion the author of it may have, or whatsoever success he may be vain enough to expect from it.

For tho' there may be some difficulties in the application of several of the *Old Testament* prophecies, cited by *Christ* and his apostles, yet I think it may evidently be made appear, that no objection from hence is of that force, as to weaken the credit of the christian religion, and to prove *Jesus Christ*, and his apostles impostors.

The great article, which this gentleman would endeavour to perswade his readers into the belief of, is, That christianity hath *no other foundation, than the prophecies of the Old Testament* to support it ; and those *prophecies not understood in their literal and obvious sense, but typically and mystically* ; that is, *in a sense different from the obvious and literal sense, which they bare in the Old Testament* ; and that therefore *they are no proofs, according to scho-*

scholaſtick rules, i. e. they are really no proofs at all, and that therefore the christian religion hath no reaſon or argument to defend it ſelf, p. 39. 40. Thus he tells us, that christianity is *nothing but Judaism explained, and ſet in a due light, as taught, or predicted in the Old Testament, p. 14. 15.* and again, *p. 24.* for which he vouches our Saviour's authority; *Moses and the prophets are, not only without farther miracles, but tho' miracles ſhould be wrought in opposition to them, a ſufficient foundation of faith;* and again, *p. 31.* *That if the proofs for christianity, from the Old Testament, be not valid; if the arguments, founded on those books, be not conclusive, and the prophecies, cited from thence, be not fulfilled, then has christianity no just foundation; for the foundation on which Jesus, and his apostles, built it, is then invalid and false;* as tho' the only foundation on which *Jesus, and his apostles, built christianity, was the prophecies of the Old Testament;* which he farther confirms, by telling us, *That the miracles ſaid to be wrought*

wrought by Jesus, and his apostles, in behalf of christianity, cannot avail any thing in the case, or be of any use to prove the divine authority and mission of Jesus Christ. Hence he tells us, that the miracles of Christ, tho' equal to what the Jews expected from the Messiah, were no proof to them that he was the Messiah, p. 34. and that they did as justly reject Jesus, and crucify him, tho' asserting his mission and doctrine, with miracles, as any other person that would have lead them into idolatry, p. 34. 36. compared. Thus doth he acquit the Jews from all the guilt of our Saviour's blood; and even justify them in crucifying the Lord of life and glory. In opposition to this low cavil against christianity, I shall endeavour,

1. To shew that christianity hath other foundations to support it, than the prophecies of the *Old Testament*. And,

2. That the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, are so far from being the sole

sole foundation of christianity, as that they are never once urged by the *New Testament* writers, as the proper, much less the only proofs of *Christ's* divine mission and authority, upon which the truth of christianity depends.





C H A P I.

CH R I S T I A N I T Y *sup-*
ported by other proofs
than the Old Testament
Prophecies.



H A T christianity hath other foundations to support it than the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, is plain from the *New Testament*, and from the apologies of all that have written in defence of it. The frame and contexture of the christian religion it self; its excellent doctrines, its admirable precepts, its powerful motives, and the end it was at first calculated, and hath a manifest tendency to promote, *viz.* the honour of the supreme being, and the present

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and future happiness of mankind, have always been accounted, and urged, as very strong arguments of its divine authority. The miracles that were wrought by *Jesus* and his apostles, in confirmation of it, the mean circumstances and education, the integrity, disinterestedness, and piety, and principles of its first publishers; and above all, the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, after his crucifixion and death, *Acts i. 3.*
who shewed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of above five hundred brethren at once, and remaining with them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, *1 Cor. xv. 6.* the consequent effusion of the *Holy Ghost* on his apostles, according to his promise, whereby they were qualified to preach the gospel to every nation thro' the gift of tongues; the amazing success, and vast progress of the gospel, in opposition to the prejudices of all mankind, the malice of the *Jews*, and the power of the *Gentiles*, whereby were verified the most express predictions of *Jesus Christ*; the

the destruction of the *Jewish* city, and temple, and nation, according as our Saviour foretold it should be ; the number, constancy, and extraordinary supports of those that died for the profession, and thereby gave their testimony to the truth of it ; these, and other such like considerations, are such reasons for our belief of christianity, as have never yet been overthrown by its professed, and most inveterate adversaries. Our faith therefore, as christians, stands not on the single foundation of *Jewish* prophecies ; much less on prophecies typically and allegorically explained, *i. e.* such, as according to our author, p. 39. are, *either not to be found in the Old Testament ; or not urged in the New, according to the literal and obvious sense, which they seem to bare in their supposed places in the Old, and therefore not proofs at all of the things they are cited to prove.* Can this author be ignorant, that such a representation of the grounds of the christian religion, is false and injurious ; and can any one that reads it help

suspecting very great dishonesty and insincerity in him that makes it? This is not that fair stating and urging objections against christianity, which, in his preface, he so strenuously argues for; and which, I wish was granted to every one without exception, that knows how to write with temper and decency. But for any one to lay down an evident falsehood, as his first principle, and on that false foundation, to scoff at, and ridicule the christian revelation, this looks not like the reasoning of an honest impartial enquirer, but like the effect of prejudice and malice, and is, I cannot help saying, a conduct unworthy either a well bred, or a virtuous man. I doubt not, but our author esteems *Cicero*, *Seneca*, and other writers of that age, much greater men than our Saviour and his apostles. If he can read them, and will be at the pains to consult them, he will find, that tho' they were no more believers in the religion of their country than he himself is, yet that they wrote with more good manners, and with much

much greater regard and love to truth, than he hath shewn in the performance under consideration; and herein they deserve his intimation. The application of the prophecies of the *Old Testament* to our Saviour, hath always been esteemed as a matter very difficult and uncertain; and various methods have been made use of, by christian expositors, to explain and defend them: An evident proof, that they did not build their faith on this foundation, either principally or wholly; but that they had other very strong reasons to support their belief in *Jesus Christ*, and that more than ballanced the difficulty of their not being able to account for many of the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, which they saw were actually applied to him by the writers of the *New*.



C H A P. II.

*Prophecies never urged by
CHRIST, and his A-
postles, as the sole proof
of Christianity.*



AVING shewn in the foregoing chapter, that christianity is supported by many other arguments, than the *Old Testament* prophecies, I proceed to shew farther, that the prophecies of the *Old Testament* are so far from being the sole foundation of christianity, as that they are never once urged by the *New Testament* writers, as the proper, much less the only proofs of the divine authority

authority and mission of *Christ*, on which depends the truth of christianity. Our Saviour himself doth not place the truth of his mission on this, as the sole foundation, nor any of his apostles after him.

In order to set this matter in a clearer light, 'twill be necessary to consider *Jesus Christ* under a twofold character, and as supporting each part of it with proper proofs. He is to be considered as a *prophet*, or a *messenger sent from God to mankind*; and as *the Messiah*, or *that particular prophet, that was anciently promised to, and had been long expected by the Jewish nation*. It is evident that these are very different considerations, whether *Christ* was a real prophet, and whether he was that particular prophet, and deliverer, spoken of in the sacred writings of the *Jews*, and who, as they believed, was to be the Saviour of their nation. The character of a prophet doth not infer that of the *Messiah*; and the same arguments that will abundantly prove the one, will be far from being a sufficient proof of the other.

Doctrines taught by any person, claiming a divine mission, agreeable to the nature of God, and conducive to the real happiness of men, supported by real miracles; or such works, as do plainly manifest, and necessarily infer the assistance of some superiour being, are certain proofs that such a one's pretensions are agreeable to the will and pleasure of God: But this will not prove him to be the *Jewish* Messiah and Saviour, without the concurrence of other circumstantial evidence; *viz.* unless the ancient prophecies, descriptions, and characters, relating to the Messiah in the *Old Testament* scriptures, be referred by such a person to himself; and actually receive their proper accomplishment in him.

If then we examine by what arguments our Saviour endeavoured to support his character, as a prophet, or to prove that he was a person that acted by authority from God, we shall find they were such, as were not at all peculiar to the *Jewish* state or circumstances; but proper for the conviction of all persons, wherever his gospel should

should be preached, or to whom the evidence of its truth should be fairly propounded. The grand characters of his divine mission, and on which he laid the principal stress, were his teaching the most excellent doctrines, and then confirming them by the most wonderful works. At his first appearance in the world, he mentions nothing of the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, nor makes any the least appeal to them for the truth of his pretensions; having no right to apply them to himself, nor hope of success, should he attempt it, 'till he had some way or other manifested that he had authority and power so to do; but refers men to *the words he spoke, which were not his own, but the father's which sent him; and to the works he wrought, which were the things that witnessed of him.* It was anciently a part of the prophetick office, to deliver to the people the meslages of God, and to instruct them in, and exhort them to their duty. Accordingly, our Saviour begins his ministry with delivering the best and most useful instructions to his followers,

ers, and carrying the great duties of morality to so noble an height, and enforcing them by such weighty motives, as that the people were astonished, both at the doctrines themselves, and at his manner of teaching them, *Mat. vii. 28, 29.* and cried out, *Did ever man speak like him?* *John vii. 46.* Such a method of instruction plainly evidenced, that he was a teacher much superior to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and was a noble preparative to his reception, as a prophet, or a person sent from God.

And his pretensions to such a character, were abundantly confirmed by those wonderful works which he performed; which *Christ* himself declares to be wrought by the finger or power of God; and which were such, as were certain and absolute proofs, that he acted under the agency and influence of some superior being. Some of the miracles he wrought were of such a nature, as that they seem to have been done by the immediate interposition of God himself; such as raising the dead, creating bread for the multitude, and

and restoring limbs to the maimed. I cannot indeed deny, but there may possibly be some created beings of so superior a nature, as to be capable of doing these things: But however, he who charges himself with the affirmative, will have a difficult task to prove. The creating something out of nothing, and raising the dead, appear, as yet, to me, to be instances of the greatest possible exertion of power, and therefore applicable only to him, *to whom all power belongs.* But whether this be so or not, it matters but little to the argument. All the circumstances of our Saviour's life make it very evident, that if his miracles were not performed by the immediate influence of God himself, yet that they were done by the assistance of some good and powerful being in subordination to him. For as a good being can never act but in a manner agreeable to the divine will, and for very good and valuable ends, so neither can an evil being stately pursue any other design, but such as is suited to his proper nature, and serviceable to his particular interest

rest and inclination. The very supposition therefore, that our Saviour wrought his miracles by the assistance of evil spirits implies, either that he was himself a very bad man, or that the end to be answered by them was evil, dishonourable to the supreme being, or prejudicial to the real happiness of men; or that being himself a wicked person, and in confederacy with spirits as wicked as himself, they could both unite to carry on a design, than which nothing could be more worthy of God, and of the best of angels, and of men to promote. That the genuine design of christianity is good, many of the more sober and unprejudiced Deists themselves have acknowledged; and it must be owned so by all, who place the worship of the only living and true God in spirit and truth, and the engaging men to the practice of all moral duties, by the most weighty motives, and so preparing them for the highest happiness, among great and good designs. And therefore our Saviour's pretensions to be a prophet of God, were abundantly justified

justified by his doctrines and miracles, tho' there had been no standing revelation from God, at that time, in the world, nor any one single prophecy relating to him.

So that what this author affirms, *p. 37. that the miracles of Jesus Christ, are no otherwise proofs of his divine mission, and the truth of christianity, than as they fulfill the sayings of the Old Testament, like other gospel matters and events,* is without any foundation of truth. Because all real miracles are certain proofs in themselves, that the person who doth them, acts by a superiour commission and power; and they may be so circumstanced, without having recourse to prediction, as to be full proof of his mission from God. Had *Jesus Christ* been the first prophet that ever appeared in the world, before there had been any manner of supernatural revelation from God, I apprehend he might have given such proof of his divine mission, tho' there had been no preceeding prophecies to bare witness to him, as would have been very

very satisfactory and convincing ; and therefore whoever can support the claim of a divine mission by such evidence, will have a just right to be believed and received as a prophet. And thus it was in fact with *Jesus Christ.* The miracles he publickly wrought were such, as did certainly argue the interposition of some superior being ; and they were wrought in confirmation of such an end, as none but a good being can be supposed to promote ; and it therefore follows, that his mission was agreeable to the will and pleasure of God, abstracted from the consideration of all former prophecies and revelations whatsoever : His miracles thus circumstanced were, contrary to what the author of *The Grounds, &c.* affirms, good proofs in themselves that he was sent of God ; and not merely on account of their being consonant to the prophecies concerning the Messiah. The great difficulty was to prove his being sent of God ; which was to be done in such a manner, as might be sufficient to convince those who never had any revelation at all, nor knew any

any thing of the *Jewish* prophecies concerning him. Without this they would have had no reason to receive him, and believe in him. The characters, whereby the Messiah was to be known, were but incidental, and peculiar to the *Jewish* nation ; and therefore could not, with any advantage to the christian religion, be urged to any other persons but *Jews*, 'till after they had been established in the belief of the divine authority of the *Jewish* scriptures ; and therefore were not at all essential to the character of a prophet. As this doth not in the least suppose the necessity of a former revelation, as that of the Messiah did (the prophecies of which revelation were to be accomplished in the person assuming that title, before they, to whom the promises of the Messiah were made, could be obliged to acknowledge and submit to him as such) so it is to be supported by such proofs, as may be sufficient to satisfy all without exception, who are commanded to believe in him, whether ever they had the benefit of a former revelation or not. So that there is a vast deal of difference

difference between the proofs from miracles, and other matters recorded in the *Old Testament*, tho' equally prophesied of with respect to the Messiah: The former being a proof to be demanded from every one that lays claim to a divine mission, and, as circumstanced in *Christ*, being demonstrative proofs that God had sent him: The latter being only proofs, that he was that particular prophet spoken of, and described in the *Jewish* scriptures.

It doth not therefore follow, as this writer, with great modesty and deference to the religion of his country, positively asserts, p. 36. *That the Jews did as justly reject Jesus, asserting his mission and doctrines with miracles, as any other person, who, in virtue of miracles, would lead them into idolatry, or any other breach of the Mosaick Law.* For real miracles, wrought in favour of doctrines contrary to truth, and that are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God, which is the case, when wrought in support of idolatry, carry with them their

their own proof, that the person who doth them is not sent of God, and that therefore he is an impostor, if he pretends to act in his name. For God can no more be the encourager of vice and idolatry, than he can oppose and contradict himself; and therefore he that doth ever so many wonderful works with such a design, and for such an end, tho' he may pretend to be a messenger from heaven, yet is immediately to be rejected as a false teacher, and seducer of the people; because no argument can possibly be so strong to prove him sent from God, as this is to prove the direct contrary. Whereas the miracles of *Christ* were performed in confirmation of no doctrines contrary to the principles of natural reason and religion; but for an end, which, from all the notions we have of God's wisdom and goodness, we have reason to think worthy of him to encourage and promote.

Nor did he, as this author seems to intimate, p. 36. ever pretend to oppose, or set aside, the real intention of the *Mosaick Law*, or lead his fol-

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lowers into the breach of it. But to obviate such an objection, plainly tells the *Jews*, in one of his discourses, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*, Mat. v: 17, 18. So that as the miracles of *Christ*, were not wrought in confirmation of any doctrines contrary to truth, or in opposition to the genuine intention and design of the *Mosaick* law, the *Jews* acted very unjustly in rejecting *Jesus*, whose mission, from his heavenly father, was supported by the noblest testimonials.

If they misunderstood their own scriptures, and expected that the Messiah should be, and do what it was never intended of God he should be or perform, tho' this might prejudice them against his person, and be an objection to their receiving him, yet it cannot in the least invalidate the real proofs of his divine mission, and therefore not wholly justify

justify the *Jews* in rejecting him; tho' possibly it may be some alleviation of their sin and guilt. That the Messiah was to be a king and a triumphant prince, was fully evident from the Scriptures. Hence the *Jews* always expected, that he should bring with him salvation and deliverance. But the nature of his kingdom, subjects, enemies, triumph and victories, was no where particularly described; the manifestation of which was reserved for the time of his appearance. Much less was it any where expressly predicted, that he should deliver them from the *Roman* power, and make *Jerusalem* the capital city of the whole earth. Of consequence his laying no claim to *a temporal kingdom*, nor proving to the *Jews*, what our author calls, a *real*, i. e. a *temporal deliverer*, was so far from being an argument that he could not be a *prophet*, that it did not prove he could not be their *Messiah*, if so be those great descriptions of the *Messiah's* kingdom and glory could fairly be interpreted, and have their

accomplishment another way. Had he indeed disclaimed any kingdom at all, and never pretended to account for his sufferings, or to expect any glorious reward of them, this would undoubtedly have justified the Jews, in not receiving him as the Messiah ; since nothing was more plainly predicted of him, than that *the government should be upon his shoulders, and that he must reign till all his enemies were put under his feet.* Since therefore, in their own confession, Jesus *spake as never man spake, and did the works that none ever did* ; since he laid claim to the honours of a kingdom, and assured all his followers, that he would obtain salvation and deliverance for them ; instead of not being disposed to take him for their Messiah, upon the account of his miracles and divine doctrines, because he appeared, in some respects, different from what they expected him, they ought rather to have searched the scripture with greater freedom from prejudice ; and to have considered whether they were not mistaken in the sense of the prophecies, and

and of consequence, as to their expectations concerning the Messiah: And the rather, because he gave, not only all the same proofs of his divine mission, as any of their former prophets did, but equal to what they expected even from the Messiah himself. Such a person's differing from them, as to the interpretation of scripture prophecies, was rather a reason why they should suspect their own judgment, than reject him upon the account of it: Especially if it could be made appear, that his account of them was more glorious and beneficial; that the same prophecies, that foretold *the Messiah's kingdom*, spake also of *his sufferings*; that it was perfectly reconcileable that the *same person* should be *crucified*, and yet a *triumphant prince*, and that as it was part of the office of a prophet to *give new revelations* of God's will, so also it was to explain the *more difficult parts of former ones*.

And supposing what our author adds, p. 35. was true) tho' 'tis not altogether so, for some of his kindred

believed in him) that *his miracles had no effect on his brethren and family*, what will he gain or prove by it? That he did no miracles at all? This his unbelieving brethren allowed, *John vii. 3, 4.* Or that he did not perform them in confirmation of excellent doctrines? He had even the testimonies of his enemies in this respect, *John vii. 4, 6.* Or that his confirming the most excellent doctrines by real miracles was no proof of his divine mission? The evidence of truth depends not on the judgment of prejudiced men concerning it; but is the same, whether it be submitted to or not. And this, in short, is the point our author should have fixed on, and proved, in order to support his scheme of infidelity; not what the opinion of the *Jews* was, concerning *Jesus* and his works, and interpretations of scripture, which is but of little weight or use; but, either that he did not do those works, nor teach those doctrines that are ascribed to him; or that if he did, they are no proper proof of his mission and authority from God.

For

For it was to this united evidence we find our Lord appealing, as to the grand arguments that his father had sent him. When he first entred on his publick ministratⁿon, the better to prepare the way for his reception, *he went about healing all manner of diseases and sicknesses among the people*, Mat. iv. 23, 24. And when John sent his two disciples to enquire of him, whether he was that person that should come, or whether they were to look for another, he gives them for answer; not *that his mother was a virgin*, or that he was *born in Bethlehem*, or of *the family of David*, or *called out of Egypt*, which would have been the most improper return to their question; but that by him *the blind received their sight*, *the lame walked*, *the lepers were cleansed*, *the deaf made to hear*, *the dead raised*, and *the gospel preached to the poor*, Mat. xi. v. Hereby putting the proof of his prophetick character and mission from God upon the miracles he wrought, and the gospel he preached. Thus also we find him appealing to the same

undoubted testimonials: As in his answer to Philip, *Believest thou not that I am in the father, and the father in me?* i. e. that the father hath sent me, and that I act by authority from him? *The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of my self, and the father that dwelleth in me he doth the works,* John. iv. 10. And from this he draws the proper inference, *Believe me that I am in the father, and the father in me,* believe my divine mission from him, on account of the truths you have heard me deliver: *If not, at least, believe me for the very works sake,* i. e. on account of the miracles you have seen me do, in confirmation of the doctrines I have taught, in my father's name. Can any thing be more evident from hence, than that our Lord here lays down his *words and works, his doctrines and miracles,* as the proper *grounds and reasons* of mens receiving and believing in him? It is true that Jesus doth now and then refer the Jews to the scriptures of the Old Testament, *Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal*

eternal life, and these are they which testify of me, John v. 39. But not as tho' the only, or proper proof of his prophetick character, and mission from God, was to be fetched from the ancient prophecies therein contained ; but either, that he gave the very same proofs of his prophetick mission, that their own scriptures had laid down ; or that, as on the one hand, he had abundantly established his character as a prophet, by his doctrines and miracles ; so they might learn on the other, by considering those ancient prophecies, and their accomplishment in him, not only to own him as a meer prophet, but to acknowledge and submit to him as their promised Messiah.

This also was the way of arguing used by his apostles after him. Thus St. Peter, in order the more effectually to bring over his countrymen, the Jews, to the faith of Christ, tells them, that Jesus of Nazareth *was a man approved of God amongst them* ; or one whom God owned to be his servant and messenger to them, *by miracles and signs and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of them, as they themselves well knew,* Acts ii. 22.

And

And the author to the *Hebrews*, in like manner declares, that the grand confirmation of the christian religion were the *signs, wonders and miracles*, that were wrought by *Christ*, and his apostles, *thro' the power of the Holy Ghost*, Heb. ii. 4. And elsewhere we are told, that this was the peculiar recommendation of the gospel, and that which rendered it *worthy of all acceptation*, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners, and to bring life and immortality to light by his gospel*, 1 Tim. i. 15. So that this is the great foundation, which the first preachers of christianity lay down, on which we are to build our faith in *Christ*, viz. the certainty of *Christ's* miracles, the nature of his doctrines, and that excellent design which he came into the world to accomplish.

And accordingly these were the things that gained him his first disciples amongst men. Thus, at the feast of passover, *Many believed in him, when they saw the miracles which he did*, John ii. 23. These, as wrought in confirmation of his doctrines, were, in the judgment of *Nicodemus*, an unanswerable argument

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ment that he was a teacher sent from God. *No man can do those miracles that thou dost, except God be with him,* John iii. 2. Or as the blind man, restored to sight by Jesus, publickly confessed before the Pharisees, *If this man was not of God, he could do nothing,* John ix. 33. At other times they were astonished at his doctrines, and could not think that such a teacher could receive his instructions from any one but God. Thus, when he was at Samaria, *Many believed because of his own word: And said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,* John iv. 41, 42. See also to this purpose, *Mark i. 22. Luke xxiv. 19.* It is evident abundantly from what hath been said, that our author hath been a little too hasty in his asserting, *that Jesus, and his apostles, ground christianity entirely on the allegorical sense of the Old Testament prophecies;* when it doth not, as I apprehend, appear from one single instance, that they ever appeal to the prophets,

prophets, as the proper evidence of *Christ's* prophetick character, and divine mission ; the proof of which, was antecedently necessary to his being acknowledged as the Messiah : On the contrary, they always refer men to his miracles and doctrines, as the most convincing arguments that God had sent him. And was it not that I have learnt from the *New Testament* to exercise that charity, which hopeth all things, I should think the contrary assertion of our author, in opposition to the plainest declarations of *Christ* and his apostles, owing, not to his want of care and enquiry, but integrity and love of truth.

The *Old Testament* doth indeed suppose the attestation of miracles necessary to support the character of the Messiah ; and therefore his working miracles was so far an accomplishment of the scripture prophecies. But then 'tis be considered, that miracles are nothing peculiar to the character of the Messiah ; but declared, in the *Old Testament* writings, as a proof always to be expected, and demanded

manded from every one pretending to act by commission from God. Such a one can have no claim to be believed, unless his pretensions be supported by proper credentials; and 'tis reasonable to expect, either that God should bare him witness, by an immediate testimony, or voice from heaven, or by some very extraordinary and wonderful works, which he enables him to do: Without some such divine interposition, to support his claim of a mission from God, it could not be known that God had sent him; and so long no one could be under any obligation to acknowledge and submit to him as such. And 'tis evident from the scriptures, that signs, and wonders, or miracles, are things which all prophets were enabled more or less to do, and that they were expected as proofs of this high character from every one that assumed it. Thus the *Jews* are represented, as seeking after a sign from *Jesus*; not as a proof of his being the *Messiah*, but of his being, what he declared himself to be, sent from God his heavenly Father. And the same
they

they would have expected from every one pretending to come in his name. And hence, both christians and *Jews*, look on the pretensions of *Mahomet* to be a prophet of God, as all imposture and cheat; because by declaring he was not sent to work miracles, in answer to those who demanded miracles from him, he refused to give that demonstration of his divine mission, which they, amongst whom he came, had a certain right to demand from him. So that the miracles prophesied of in the *Old Testament*, to be done by the *Messiah*, were not spoken of as somewhat peculiar to his character, and whereby he might be known, and distinguished from all other prophets; but as proofs to be expected in common from all, who pretended to a prophetick inspiration and authority. And tho' the *Jews* were inclined, many of them, to believe in *Christ*, as the *Messiah*, when they heard of his extraordinary works, yet were not these, in themselves, the sole inducement to their owning him as such. But, as he manifestly proved himself to be an extraordinary prophet of God,

by

by the numerous miracles he wrought, his excellent doctrines, and method of teaching, so they were ready to conclude farther, that he must be the Messiah, because they saw many circumstances, relating to the Messiah, concur in him ; and especially, as these miracles were wrought at that particular time and season, when they universally expected the Messiah's appearance. And therefore the miracles of *Christ* are not to be urged as absolute proofs of his being the Messiah, *i. e.* of the accomplishment of the *Old Testament* prophecies relating to the Messiah; nor are they produced, that I know of, by any one, thus to *render a foundation valid, which is in itself invalid*; or to make a *false inference true*; or a *prophecy fulfilled, that is not fulfilled*. This is the meer figment and imagination of our author, who seems to think, that every body writes with as little consistency, and regard to truth, as he doth himself. But doth it therefore follow, as he would feign perswade us, that the miracles said to be wrought by *Christ* and his apostles, for he seems to question

stion the truth of them, are of no avail? p. 31. Or that because they do not prove what they were never intended to prove, that therefore they prove nothing at all? Or that because they were not in themselves sufficient to distinguish and point out the Messiah, that therefore they are of no use to establish his character as a prophet? The characters of a prophet and Messiah carry very different ideas, and are to be supported by as different proofs. Many particular circumstances, no ways implied in the notion of a prophet, such as the place, and manner of birth and life, &c. must concur to point out the Messiah; whilst the confirming good doctrines, and holy precepts, by real miracles, are certain and sufficient proofs of a prophetick mission, in him, who thus confirms his pretensions to it. These things concurred in *Jesus Christ*; who never applied to himself any of the *Old Testament* prophecies, to prove himself the Messiah, 'till he had abundantly manifested his mission from God; and hereby his power and right to explain the writings, and apply the prophecies of the prophets that were before him.



C H A P. III.

*Of the Dependance that
CHRISTIANITY bath
on Judaism.*



T must be acknowledged that the truth of christianity doth now depend, not only on *Christ's* being a real prophet, but on his being the true Messiah ; because he himself claimed this double honour, and his apostles, after him, applied to him the ancient prophecies relating to the Messiah. And therefore I think our author would have talked much more to the purpose, if he had endeavoured to prove, that some of the *jewish* prophecies, which referred to the Messiah, were not accomplished in our

O Jesus,

Jesus, than he hath done in finding fault because his apostles have applied so many to him. For in reality, supposing that some of the passages they refer to him did not originally respect the Messiah, this will not in the least shake the foundations of our Saviour's divine mission, which depends on the truth of the gospel history: And the truth of this depends, not on the inspiration and infallibility of his apostles, but on their knowledge of the facts therein ascribed to him, and their integrity and honesty in relating them. So that if he can shew, that they have impertinently applied any passages out of the *jewish* writings to *Christ*, the consequence to be allowed is, not that *Jesus* was an impostor, which is the great point he weakly attempts to establish; but either that they were mistaken in the sense of such passages themselves; or rather, that they applied them in that sense, in which they were then generally understood by the *Jews* themselves. But if he can fairly make it appear, that any of the prophetick passages, applied by the *Jews* to their Messiah, were never

never accomplished in our *Jesus*, this I will allow to be of great disservice to christianity ; the truth of which depends on his being the Messiah, as well as on his being a real prophet ; he having affirmed it of himself, that he was so. But then 'tis to be considered, that christianity hath not any natural intrinsick dependance even on this, and had not our blessed Lord took on him the character of the Messiah, never would have had any at all. Had he been born in the most distant parts of the earth from *Judea*, and done the same works, and taught the same doctrines, and propagated his religion by the same means, and never either heard or spoke of the *jewiſh* scriptures, he would have been a prophet of God, and his religion, as it ought to have been received, so would have been sufficient to have guided men into all virtue and happiness. So that the true, and, I think, only reason, why christianity hath any dependance on *jewiſh* prophecies, or *Christ's* being the Messiah, is not because it would have been an imperfect institution without this ;

but because *Christ* assumed this character, and applied the prophecies, originally relating to the Messiah, to himself. And the great question will be, whether the same person can be supposed, at the same time, to prove himself both a real prophet, and a real impostor? Christianity, as a revelation from God, stood upon solid and substantial proofs, antecedent to his appeal to the ancient prophets, and would have carried its obligations upon all, to whom the evidence of it should have been proposed, to have owned and submitted to it as such, tho' he had never cited or applied any one of these prophecies at all. And yet if, at the same time, he declared himself to be the Messiah, when in reality he was not, so far his testimony would have been false; or in other words he would have been an impostor, or seducer: A supposition so very absurd, that no one but a person, at all hazards, resolved never to be a christian, can possibly admit the truth of. So that christianity's depending on the truth of *Christ*'s being the Messiah, is somewhat foreign

foreign to its nature, and meerly accidental: And therefore upon *Christ's* claiming this double character, both of a prophet and the Messiah, the first enquiry, in order of nature, should be; not whether he was the Messiah, because that involves with it the character of a prophet; but whether or no he was a true prophet. If he was not, his pretensions to be the Messiah ought to have been immediately rejected; if he was a real prophet, he had a right to be believed on his assuming the farther character of the Messiah; *i. e.* It was highly reasonable, that those who were convinced that he was the former, should believe him, upon his affirming himself to be the latter; or, that the *Old Testament* prophecies were, or would be also verified in him, even tho', according to the then received interpretation of them, they might not be able to understand how. Not because hereby a false interpretation or application of scripture could be made a true one; but because 'tis highly incredible, that God would permit the same person to be a true prophet, and

a real impostor; or that any superior good beings should help a person to work miracles, to confirm both truth and falsehood; or that a true prophet could be so presumptuous and wicked, as to claim so great an honour, if it did not in reality belong to him. And therefore, tho' the proof of *Christ's* being a prophet had, originally, no dependence on his being the Messiah, yet, on his declaring himself to be that person whom the *Jews* expected, the one could not be believed without the other: And his testimony, in this respect, was worthy of belief, both because he sufficiently proved his mission from God, and as shall be shewn, the *Old Testament* prophecies were accomplished in him.

So that the apology which this author makes for the *Jews*, for their *rejecting* and *crucifying* the *Lord of life and glory*, when he tells us, p. 34. *that the numerous and wonderful miracles verougt by Jesus, tho' equal to what the Jews expected from their Messiah, were no proofs to them that he was the Messiah,* is very far from being

being sufficient to vindicate their conduct. For if *Christ*, by his miracles and doctrines, gave sufficient evidence of his being sent from God, they were bound to receive him as such, upon this evidence: And their crucifying a prophet of God, in opposition to such a demonstration of his divine mission, was an argument of great obstinacy and wickedness. And if having thus established his character, as a prophet, he farther claimed to be that particular prophet whom they expected, and in confirmation hereof, continued to teach more excellent doctrines than all the preceeding prophets had ever taught, and to perform as many, and as wonderful works, as, according to their own confession, the Messiah himself was to do, when he came; their not being dispos'd to receive him as the Messiah, doth not argue a deficiency of proof in him, but the want of an honest and unprejudiced disposition of mind in them.

Nor can it be argued, from this connection of *christianity* with *judaism*, what our author, with his usual candor, asserts, p. 15. that *christianity*

and *judaism* is the same thing; or that the *gospel* is not a new law, but *judaism explained*, and set in a due light; or that, as he tells us, p. 13. the Old Testament is yet the sole true canon of scripture, as it was in the beginning of *christianity*. 'Tis true, that the first and grand principles of religion are the same, under both the *jewish* and *christian* dispensations; such as the unity of God, the worshiping him only, and the worshipping him in sincerity and truth, as the necessary and certain way to secure his blessing and acceptance. So far all true religions must agree; and of consequence the *jewish* and *christian*, which, as they were the only religions in the world, that sufficiently guarded against *polytheism* and *idolatry*, so each of them appeals to God for its author. And it must also be farther owned, that the prophets, amongst the *Jews*, did predict many things that should happen to the Messiah, and many things which should come to pass, after the government should be upon his shoulders; which predictions have been exactly verified.

verified. What will follow from hence? Why that God, who is an intelligent self-conscious being, tho' for wise reasons he was pleased to settle the *jew-ish* form of worship, for a season, yet had determined to introduce a more perfect dispensation, by a greater and more excellent person than *Moses*, by whom he made himself known to the *Jews*; and accordingly foretold, by inspired men amongst them, many things relating to this future great person, and the end of his coming. But doth it follow, that because *judaism* (which was designed only for a particular Nation, and was therefore to last but for a particular season) was to be succeeded by a more excellent and perfect religion, it was therefore the same with that religion that was to succeed it: Or that because the *jew-ish prophets* did *plainly* foretell many things, that were afterwards to happen under the *Messiah*, that therefore these things were the *secret mystical meaning* of their prophecies? Excellent reasoning this of our author's! *Judaism* foretold a better institution

stitution in future times: *Ergo*, that institution is the same with *judaism*. The *jewish* prophets *plainly foretold* many things that were to come to pass in the *Messiah's* time, which predictions have accordingly been verified: Therefore the actual accomplishment of these predictions, is the *spiritual secret* sense of them. Who can withstand the force of such an argument, and how terribly is *christianity* in danger, that hath *so fair, yet powerful* an adversary to oppose it? And was there ever a more clear, useful, and convincing proposition advanced than this, *That the plain prophecies of the Jewish prophets have been fulfilled by the secret spiritual sense of them.*

But however, *christianity* must still be *mystical judaism*: For according to our author, p. 15. St. Paul faith, *Gal. iii. 8. Heb. 11.* *That many of the Jews were, long before the coming of Christ, deemed real christians, and equally to believe the gospel or christianity, with those who were converted by the apostles.* I frankly own, I should have

have had as mean an opinion of St. *Paul*, had he asserted this, as I have of our author, for asserting this of St. *Paul*. The apostles words are, *They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen thro' faith, περιγγελισατο preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *In thee shall all nations be blessed.* Now the plain meaning of this passage is this, that such who imitate the faith of *Abraham*, are properly his children; and that that gracious promise, which God was pleased to make to *Abraham* in ancient times, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, was to be accomplished, even as the scriptures foretold it should, by their being justified by faith, even as *Abraham* was justified by faith. But most divine is our author's comment here; and so well versed is he in mystical meanings, as that he can draw a secret spiritual sense out of this plain passage. As thus, the scripture did περιγγελιζεσαι, or God, as the scripture relates, brought this good message to *Abraham*, *In thee shall*

shall all, &c. Therefore many, in *Abraham's* time, did *equally* believe the gospel with those that were afterwards converted by the apostles. Or thus, the scriptures did plainly predict that the *Gentiles* were to be justified by faith; therefore many, in *Abraham's* time, were deemed real christians; or therefore *christianity* is nothing but *judaism* explained, and set in a due light; *i. e.* mystical *judaism*. Can such a secret spiritual meaning, and account of so plain a passage, have any other than divine discernment? p. 93. Or could any one, but a person of our *author's* great intelligence, have imagined this to have been St. Paul's intention? *Happy man*, whose imagination is fruitful with such conjectures, and who employs his pen in giving us such new, yet *faithful comments* on our scriptures! But in the same *divine strain*, he farther argues. *It is to be observed*, saith he, p. 15. that our *Saviour*, who assures us that he came to fulfill the *law* and the *prophets*, and not to destroy the religion of the *Jews*, left nothing in writing to

to establish his new law, if it may be so called, which was not properly a new law, but judaism explained, and set in a due light. Let us attend now to our author's admirable manner of drawing consequences. *Christ* declares that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets, i. e. to answer all the predictions relating to the Messiah; therefore he came not to set aside the *jewish* sacrifices, to alter or destroy the *jewish* religion: Or thus, *Christ* declared, he came to fulfill the law and the prophets, i. e. to bring in that new dispensation spoken of in the law and the prophets; therefore he hath not established a new law: Or thus, *Christ* came to fulfill the prophecies of the *Old Testament*; therefore the religion of *Christ*, is *judaism* explained, and set in a due light. How natural do these consequences, from their premises, appear at first view? And how great an opinion must we form of so exact and critical a reasoner!

The truth is, that *christianity* and *judaism* are so far from being the same, that they differ in every thing,
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in which *true religions* can be supposed to differ; the latter being appointed for a particular season, and end, and confined to one people only; designed as an introduction to, and prophesying of a future better state; abounding with ceremonies, and rites of no intrinsick worth, and supported by promises, and threatenings, mostly, if not altogether temporal: Whereas christianity is that more excellent state prophecied of in the other, designed for perpetual use, and to be of universal obligation; as it recommends the worship of God in spirit and in truth only, and is supported by the noblest motives, *viz.* arguments drawn from the intercession of an all powerful Mediator, and the rewards and punishments of an eternal state. ~



C H A P IV.

Of the New Testament
Canon.

S our author hath been ver-
ry unhappy, in his attempt
to prove *christianity* and
judaism to be the same, so
I hope it may be made appear, that
'tis with as little reason that he asserts
farther, p. 13, 14. that the *Old Testa-
ment* is the *sole true canon of scrip-
ture to christians* (meaning thereby a
*canon established by those, who had a
divine authority to establish a canon,*
*and in virtue thereof did establish a
canon*) as it was in the beginning of
christianity: Of which passage, I think
this is the plain meaning, viz. That
because the *New Testament* writers
had

had no power to establish a canon, and did not actually, in virtue of that power, establish any canon, that therefore, if the canon of the *Old Testament* is a canon thus established, 'tis the sole canon now to christians. I must observe here, that our author seems to have as mean an opinion of the *jewish*, as the *christian* canon; and readily confesses, p. 135. &c. *That the books of the Old Testament are greatly corrupted, i. e. changed from what they were, when they proceeded from the authors of them;* that as to the *Pentateuch particularly, it must have been, above all the other books, liable to great alterations, because there was but one copy of it left for a considerable while.* And that as to all the others, *they were liable to great corruptions during the captivity; and that they were considerably altered by Esdras, or some body else,* he knows not who, *after the captivity.* It seems from hence, that he would feign have us, *good man,* believe, that neither *jews nor christians* have any proper canon at all. I confess, I have other thoughts.

thoughts. As to the corruptions of the *jewish* writings, I shall consider that matter elsewhere; and only shew here, that, *as christians*, we have *a canon*, and that *entirely distinct from the jewish one.*

Let it then be considered, that if our blessed Lord was a real prophet, and sent by God to instruct the world, then, whatever he delivered in the name of God, became a proper canon or rule of action. If the doctrines he taught, and the precepts he gave, proceeded from God, those who heard him were obliged to believe the one, and submit to the other, in obedience to God; *i. e.* they would have been the *canon* or *rule* of their *faith* and *practice*. Of consequence, if these doctrines and precepts were designed for the general use of mankind, and they were faithfully taken down in writing, by persons who heard them, or who had them brought to their remembrance, in an extraordinary supernatural manner; they would carry with them the same obligation upon all, to whom they should be manifested,

with their proper evidence, in the most distant ages and nations. Again, if the apostles of our blessed Lord had an unerring spirit, to lead them into all those truths that were necessary to form, establish, and preserve the *christian* church, then whatever they taught, under the influence of that spirit, was a canon, or rule, to those churches, amongst whom they ministred. If they taught any things of general concern, such things would have been of general obligation: If any of their directions were suited only to particular circumstances, those directions would have obliged only in like circumstances; or have been a canon or rule of action, when the same, or like things should have occurred, that first occasioned them. If these directions were delivered at several times, or not known to be the directions of such persons, 'till many years, or ages, after they were first given, yet they will still carry their obligation, whenever they are known or believed to be such; because the directions of those, who were themselves directed by an unerring spirit

fit in giving them. If this reasoning be good, then, as *christians*, we have a sufficient canon, or rule of faith and practice, entirely distinct from the *jewish*. For if the gospels contain a true account of *Christ's* life, and doctrines, and of the will of God delivered, for the general use, by *Christ*; then they are a proper canon or rule from God to us. The question is not, whether *Christ* wrote the gospels, or whether he declared them canonical? We own he did not. But whether what they contain be a just account of that revelation he brought from God? If it be, I will take upon me to answer our author's question, *If Jesus, and his apostles, have declared no books canonical, I would ask, Who did, or could, afterwards declare, or make any books canonical?* Why every man, who believes that these books do contain a genuine account of the gospel of *Christ*, and that his gospel is a revelation from God; the canonicalness of any book, or our being obliged to receive any book as a rule, depending solely on its containing the will of,

or a revelation from God. In like manner, if the epistles, said to be written by the apostles, are really theirs; if they were so instructed by the divine spirit, in the nature of Christ's gospel and kingdom, as to qualify them to gather churches by their preaching, and to direct them in cases of importance, by epistles, when absent from them; why then these epistles are properly canonical, *i. e.* they are a proper rule to all christian churches, as far as they contain instructions of general use, or as far as they suit the particular circumstances of any church.

What then, if it were true, what our author asserts, p. 14. tho' 'tis far from being so, *That the books of the New Testament are all occasional books,* this will not hinder their being canonical. Were they written by those whose names they bare? And did they contain proper directions for those, for whose use they were originally written? If so, they were then canonical; *i. e.* they were designed, and ought to have been received as a rule by those,

those, who were the occasions of their being first written ; and they are so far a rule to us, and will be to the church in all succeeding ages, as there is any thing in them suitable to our circumstances or theirs.

'Tis to as little purpose to object, p. 14. that the books of the *New Testament* were not joyned together in one body or collection, nor declared to be canonical 'till the seventh century, when the controversy about the canon was, as our author tells us, determined by *human authority*. For would our author have had the books of the *New Testament* collected into one volume before some of them were written ? Or would he have had the *last living* apostle collected all the writings of the other apostles into one book, when, 'tis probable, he had never seen many of them ? The canonicalness of any books doth not depend on any one apostle's collecting them into a volume. If *Paul* and *John* wrote this and the other epistle, and if it appears that they wrote them as apostles, i. e. for the direction and obedience of the church, they

will be canonical, or rules to all churches in like circumstances, whether ever *Peter* and *James* declared them so or not. If any book be not written by an inspired person, neither *Peter* nor *Paul* could make it an inspired book; and if it was written by such a one, it needed not *Peter* or *Paul's* approbation. What then tho' this, or the other book was not received, as canonical, 'till several hundred years after *Christ*? This proves nothing but that the evidence for its being written by the apostle, whose name it bares, was not clear 'till this time; and its being received as canonical, at such a distance after it was written, proves that there was new evidence of its being an apostolick writing; or at least, that that evidence appeared satisfactory to some, which was not deemed sufficient by others. And therefore all that can be inferred hence is, that to whom the evidence is less convincing, there will be a proportionably lesser degree of assent in them, and authority in the book.

The collection of all the books into one volume, by any one apostle, seems almost

almost impossible; the epistles being written at different times, to different churches, and at very remote distances from each other. It was necessary that the several epistles should be communicated by those churches, to whom they were first written, to others, that the proofs of their being apostolical writings, and the occasions of their being first penned might be carefully examined. And when once there was sufficient proof, that they were the epistles of the apostles of *Jesus Christ*, and written for the use of the church; any man might have gathered them into a volume, and that volume would instantly have become a canon, or rule of faith and practice to *christians*; not because established as such by any human authority, but because the writings of those, that were authorized and qualified to be the teachers of the church of *Christ*. And if there could, at this distance of time, be found one, or more epistles of any of the apostles, written with the same view; they would also, for the same reason, be *canonical*, notwithstanding it would be

now almost seventeen hundred years before their discovery.

So that the enemies of *christianity* seem hitherto to have quite mistaken the controversy, or at least to have kept clear of the main turning point of it. 'Tis ridiculous to be nibbling at the authority of this, or the other book, or to be continually dinning us about the time of the establishment of our canon. This is manifestly quite beside the purpose. The controversy lies here, and here let our enemies speak all they know. Had our apostles the *Holy Ghost*? Had they the care of the churches? Did they write any epistles to them for their direction and government? Are the books we now have, any, or most of them, their writings, lesser errors excepted? Let them *prove the negative*, and 'twill be then time enough to think of *parting with our christianity*: 'Till they can do this, all their attempts to undermine the religion of *Jesus Christ*, will be vain and ineffectual.

I shall only add here, that when we speak of this, or the other book,
or

or all the books of the *New Testament*, as being a canon, we do not mean that every individual word, or sentence, in those books is, or ever was designed to be a rule; but that they are a rule as far as they contain the *gospel of Christ*, *i. e.* in every thing wherein they can be, or ought to be a rule. When St. *Luke*, in the *preface* to his gospel, declares the reasons that induced him to write it, and when St. *Paul*, in the close of his epistle to *Timothy*, orders him to bring to him *the cloak he left at Troas, and the books and parchments*, 2 Tim. iv. 13. I do not apprehend the *gospel* hath any thing to do with these, and the like things; and therefore cannot think such parts of our epistles and gospels rules; because occasionally given, and not at all relating to faith and practice. But whenever the apostles write about the *gospel of Christ*, either stating or defending its principles, or giving and enforcing the precepts of it, in which the whole of their writings, some few expressions excepted, are taken up; thus far they are canonical, *i. e.* a proper rule

rule to us ; because, as the apostles certainly had the gospel by revelation from the spirit of *Christ*, so 'tis reasonable to think, that the same spirit should direct them to proper arguments and motives to support it : Nor doth any supposition appear more incredible, than that God should, in so extraordinary a manner, reveal the gospel to the apostles, and yet leave them at an entire loss how to support it, or suffer them to support it by false arguments. Not to add that it was the express promise of our Lord, that he would lead them into all truth ; *i. e.* enable them fully to understand his gospel, and direct them to the most proper methods to propagate and defend it. But it will be time enough to state this part of the controversy, when our adversaries have any thing material to offer upon it. I therefore return to our author.

And that I may agree with him as far as I can, I am very free to own, *that miracles*, as he odly enough expresses it, *under the circumstance of attesting something contrary to an antecedent revelation*.

revelation, really such, will not prove the person who doth them sent of God, nor the truth of what he delivers in the name of God. Yea, I will go farther, and affirm that such a one, notwithstanding his miracles, cannot be sent of God. And therefore, if any person teaches contrary doctrines, or opposes the true and proper design of that former revelation, he is not to be received as God's messenger, (because God cannot reveal contradictions as truths) tho' he should work never so many miracles to confirm it. After this observation, one would have expected, he should have fairly shewn, how *Christ's* doctrines were contrary to those delivered by former prophets, or that he plainly contradicted the design of the *jewiſh* revelation. But here again he flies off, and his strength fails him; and instead of proof, he tells us of allegorical reasonings, and mystical senses, and the interpretations of Rabbies; and when he should argue, puts in the room of it groundless suppositions, and, in a multitude of words, says nothing at all to the purpose.

But

But now on the contrary, if a person, pretending to a mission from God, owns the truth and authority of such a former revelation, supplies what was defective in it, clears up what was obscure, or but darkly intimated, establishes and confirms it's noblest maxims and principles, and is so far from overthrowing its proper design, as that he openly declares he came into the world on purpose, and by the most proper methods labours, to fulfill and answer it; and in confirmation of such a pretension, besides the most excellent doctrines taught, doth numerous wonders and miracles, this is the strongest argument that his pretensions are true, and that he ought to be received in the character he assumes. This was, as our author well knows, what at least *Jesus Christ* pretended to; and 'till the contrary can be fairly proved, banter and ridicule, hard names, groundless insinuations, and the like, will, with wise men, be no disservice to *christianity*, nor give any reputation to the cause of scepticism and infidelity.

In fine, the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, as they were performed in confirmation of a religion worthy of God, and conducive to the present and future happiness of men, tho' they did not, because of themselves they could not, prove him to be the Messiah; yet they did evidence him to be a prophet sent from God, and are therefore a substantial proof of the truth of *christianity*. And therefore I add once more, if this gentleman, and his friends would do any thing to the purpose, to weaken the credit of *christianity*, they must either prove, that the facts ascribed to *Jesus Christ* are false, or that they were not performed by the assistance of some superior power; or that the end they were wrought in favour of was not good; or that bad men, in confederacy with evil spirits, can stately pursue a design contrary to their nature and interest; or that good spirits can lend their assistance, to enable a person to work miracles, in confirmation of his pretensions to a mission from God, that really had none. 'Till these things, or some

some of them, be plainly made out; their starting difficulties about ancient prophecies, and other matters of lesser moment, may discover their inclination to prove *christianity* a falsehood, but can never subvert that firm foundation, on which the truth of it is established.

Not that I think there is such a vast deal of difficulty in the application of the prophecies of the *Old Testament* to our blessed Saviour, as hath been imagined. Our author asserts indeed, that they are *impertinently alledged*, p. 32. That they are not some of them to be found at all in the *Old Testament*, and when they are, not urged by the *New Testament writers*, according to their literal and obvious sense, p. 39. And that therefore all commentators on the *Bible*, and advocates for the *christian religion*, both ancient and modern, have judged them to be applied in a secondary, typical, mystical, allegorical, enigmatical sense; i. e. in a sense different from the obvious and literal sense, which they bare in the *Old Testament*, i. e. impertinently and falsely.

falsly. I shall forbare all censures, which some would judge such an untrue representation deserves; and instead of reproaching so unfair an adversary, shall endeavour to give some satisfactory account of the *Old Testament* prophecies, as they are applied by the writers of the *New.*





C H A P. V.

*Concerning the Sense and
Reference of the Old
Testament Prophecies.*



ONTHING I think is more evident, than that many passages of the *Old Testament* writings have a farther reference, than to the times wherein they were first penned, and the persons to whom, in part, they might more immediately belong. I am not now to enquire to what distant times, or persons they were intended to refer; but to shew from the *certain, literal, natural sense of the words*, that they did not wholly relate to, and were not fully accomplished at the time when they

they were first delivered. Out of many passages, that have this view, I shall select some few of the principal ones. And here 'twill be difficult to account, in any tolerable manner, for that passage, Gen. iii. 15. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,* unless it refers to some future person, who was to gain a compleat victory over him, by whose temptation our first parents fell. *The seed of the woman* here spoken of, the antipathy that was to reign between them, and the different issues of this antipathy make it evident, that he who spake these words had some very remote season and event in view; *Eve*, as yet, having no children, and it being therefore impossible that the words could be then accomplished. The whole story indeed would be incredible, if we suppose the serpent, literally understood, to be the tempter. But 'tis not at all improbable, that an evil spirit, in the form of this once beautiful creature, should perswade them to a revolt. In his own

proper character he durst not appear : It must be in some shape familiar to *Eve*, that he might the better insinuate himself into her good opinion, and so the more easily deceive her : And if so, 'twas very improbable that the *serpent*, literally understood, should be punished, whilst the great *seducer himself* should be suffered to escape without it. His punishment was to be *the bruising of his head*, or the destruction of his power by *the womans seed*; an insignificant curse, if it respected only the *serpent, the beast of the field*; but worthy the supreme governour, if denoting his punishment, by whose craft the woman was perswaded into the first transgression. And this exposition is somewhat confirmed by God's promise to *Abraham*, Gen. xii. 3. *In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*; which promise, that *Abraham* might not understand it of his own time or person, is afterwards more clearly explained, Gen. xxii. 18. *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Could *Abraham* understand this of any present blessing that

that the world was to receive from him? Or rather, was it not an encouragement to him to look forward, and to expect some one or other of his posterity, who should prove a common blessing to mankind? And is there not manifestly the like view to futurity, in that prophetick blessing of Jacob to his son Judah? Gen. xlix. 10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, until Shilow come: And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* Here is manifestly a distant event foretold: That the scepter should be given to Judah: That Shilow should come: That the scepter should not depart from Judah 'till Shilow's appearance: And that then to him should be the gathering of the people. I cannot help here taking notice also of the words of Moses, mentioned by the author of the *Grounds*, &c. p. 28. Deut. xviii. 15. *A prophet will the Lord your God raise up unto thee, like unto me. To him shall ye hearken.* The gloss he puts on the passage is, *That God would establish an order and succession of prophets amongst them, in analogy to the heathen*

heathen diviners, who, for victuals, and presents, and money, were to shew their divine inspiration, by discovering lost Goods, and telling of fortunes. And for this he cites several passages of the *Old Testament*, which, not one of them, carry so low and ludicrous a meaning as he insinuates ; nor mention any thing below the character and dignity of a prophet of God to discover and foretell. I will not deny, but that this may be part of the meaning of this passage, that God would, from time to time, raise them up prophets, to instruct them in his will, to support them in time of danger, to direct them in cases doubtful and uncertain, to encourage them to obedience, to recall them from idolatry, to help the distressed, and to predict some special great events, as there should be occasion for such an extraordinary interposition. But, this I affirm, is not *the first, the natural and literal meaning* of these words ; which evidently refer to *some one particular prophet* that, in process of time, was to be raised up, who was to be like unto *Moses* ; and who therefore was to be highly in God's favour, and to bring a new revelation into the world

as *Moses* did, as well as to be the author of a very great deliverance as he was. It was necessary all these circumstances should concur in this prophet, to the literal accomplishment of these words ; and therefore they had a much farther view, than to the present time, in which they were first spoken. And 'tis here remarkable, that he, who added the last chapter to the book of *Deuteronomy*, tells us, *That there rose not a prophet since, in Israel, like unto Moses* : A plain confession, that in his time this prophecy was not accounted to have been fulfilled.

In the book of *Psalms* we shall also find many passages that speak of things, not to have their accomplishment until after times ; either describing some great and glorious person, that was to sit on the throne of *Israel* ; or that was to be subject to the most grievous and cruel reproaches and sufferings. Thus the 110th Psalm speaks of one, *who was to have an everlasting kingdom and priesthood* ; *to reign over willing subjects, and to triumph over all his enemies*. The same person is de-

scribed *Psal.* xlv. in terms more expressive of majesty and glory : *As girding his sword on his thigh, riding prosperously because of truth, meekness, and righteousness; as a God having a throne for ever and ever, as being anointed of God with the oyl of gladness above his fellows.* The *lxxii Psalm* is also a farther instance of this nature, which, tho' the title shews it was in part penned with a view to *Solomon*, yet contains such strong descriptions, as I am apt to think few will allow to be literally true of him. As particularly those which relate to the glory, prosperity, perpetuity, and extent of his kingdom, ver. 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17. *They shall fear thee, as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.* *He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him.*

— *The kings of Tarshish, and of the Isles shall bring presents: The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea all kings shall fall down before him: All nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for ever: His name shall*

shall be continued as long as the sun. Other passages seem to be directly contrary to some parts of his known character ; such as relate to the continued righteousness of his reign, and the equity, justice, and mildness of his administration, ver. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14. *He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.* These, and the like descriptions, seem not very applicable to *Solomon*; it plainly appearing from his history, that he was a lover of women, degenerated into *idolatry*, and laid such burthens on his people to maintain his grandure, and support him in his pleasures, as laid the foundation for the revolt of the ten tribes, from his son and successor *Rehoboam*; and to whom God was pleased, even in his life time, to

raise up many powerful enemies, because his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. See *1 Kings*, xi. throughout.

In the prophetick writings, the reference of the prophecies to some future times is yet more manifest and clear, and as plain as the most express words can make it. How full are they of lofty descriptions of the happiness and glory of some distant season, that was to fall out under the reign of a wise and good, a mighty and victorious prince, that was to proceed from *David's family*. *Isaiah* abounds with such prophetick descriptions. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots*, *Isaiah xi. 1*. And in the following part of the chapter, the equity and righteousness of his government, and the security and happiness of his subjects under him, is elegantly set forth. See also *chap. ix. 2, 3, 4*. The same is farther declared, *Isaiah xxxii. 1*. *Behold a king shall reign in righteousness*: And in *chap. xxxv*

he assures the fearful Jews, that there was an happy time coming, when the most beneficial miracles should be wrought, and when holiness and purity should more universally obtain. In *chap. xlvi.* God is introduced as speaking of some particular person, in whom he *delighted*, and whom he would *up-hold*, and who was to be *a covenant to the people, and for a light to the Gentiles.* The same person is evidently spoken of, *Isai. xlix.* where God is represented as declaring, that he should *raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel; and that he should be given for a light to the Gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth.* In *chap. 52, 53.* he is spoken of, but under very different circumstances. As that *his visage should be extreamly marred, that he should appear without form and comeliness, that he should be rejected of men, that he should be cut off out of the land of the living, and be stricken for the transgression of the people.* But that nevertheless he should live to see his seed, and prolong his days; that he should see

see of his travel of his soul and be satisfied, and that he should have a portion with the great, and divide the spoil with the strong; even for this reason, because he poured out his soul unto death, was numbed with the transgressors, bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. And to mention no more, he is spoken of chap. 61, 63. as one *anointed by the spirit of God, to proclaim salvation and deliverance to persons of a broken and contrite heart, as one travelling in the greatness of his strength, and mighty to save; as one that had obtained the most glorious victory by his own arm, and as returning from battle in triumph, wearing garments stained with the blood of his slain and conquered enemies.* I am not now enquiring to whom these descriptions are to be referred. But from the passages I have mentioned, and others that might have been produced out of the same book, there is nothing more evident, than that the grand argument, which *Isaiah* insists on, to comfort the pious Jews in those calamitous times and

and which is interwoven in almost every prophecy he delivered, was the promise of more peaceable and happy times, under the reign of some great and good prince, that was to descend from *David's* family, and *of whose government and throne there should be no end.*

Jeremiah also, who prophesied after *Isaiah*, spake plainly of the same happy season. *Behold the days come saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is his name, whereby he shall called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,* *Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.* And he elsewhere declares, that *the days shall come, and when so likely as under this victorious and righteous prince, when God would make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: A covenant more excellent than that he made with their fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Ægypt, viz.*

That

That he would put his law in their inward Parts, and write it in their hearts; and when they should all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest of them, and have their iniquities forgiven, and their sins remembered no more, chap. xxxi. 31. And that this happy season was to be under the government of that righteous branch, that was to proceed from *David*, seems evident from *chap.* xxxiii. where the prophet, speaking of the joyful state, and settled government of God's people to come, declares, That in those days, and at that time, God would cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and that he should execute judgment and righteousness: That in his days Judah should be saved, and Jerusalem should dwell safely, and that the name, he was to be called by, should be THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Ezekiel also, who succeeded *Jeremiah*, speaks in the same strain, of one that was to come from *David's* family, and under whom the people of God were to enjoy the greatest security and happiness. Thus he introduces God, as declaring,

claring, I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David ; he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince amongst them : I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, Ezek. xxxiv. 23, &c. And this covenant he elsewhere describes in the very same manner, as Jeremiah did that covenant of which he prophesied, viz. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : From all your filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you — And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them, chap. xxxvi. 25, &c. Compare Jerem. xxxi. 31, &c. And to conclude, in another place he expressly declares the same things should come to pass, under the same reign that he had spoken of before, viz. chap. xxxvii. 23, &c.

Daniel also speaks of a certain number of years, that was to intervene between the restoration of the Jews, and the coming of *Messiah the Prince*, and concerning whom he declares, that he should be cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 25, 26.

Joel in like manner declares, that there was an happy season coming, when it should be known, more than ever, that God was in the midst of Israel, and when his people should never be ashamed; when his spirit should be poured out upon all flesh, and their sons and daughters should prophecy, and when the spirit was to be poured out upon the very servants and handmaids, and all without exception to be saved, that should call upon the name of the Lord, Joel ii. 27, &c.

In *Micah* we find also descriptions of the same flourishing state of things. *In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established, in the top of the mountain — and people shall flow unto it; and many nations shall come and say, come and let us go up to the mountain*

tain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, for he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, ch. iv. 1, 2. And in the next chapter he farther declares, under whom this happy season should commence. *Thou Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little amongst the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings have been from of old, from everlasting.* And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Lord his God, and they shall abide. For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace, chap. v. 2, 4, 5.

Haggai not only speaks of this illustrious person, but fixes the time beyond which his appearance should not be delayed. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I will shake all nations, and the desire of nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of Hosts.* The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, and in this place will I give peace saith the Lord, Hag. ii. 7, 9.

In *Zechariah* we find repeated mention of some illustrious servant of God, that was to appear, under the character of the *Branch*, in whose time God would remove the *iniquity of his people in one day*, chap. iii. 8, 9. In the next chapter he is represented in very extraordinary characters: *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bare the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord*, chap. vi. 12, 13, 15. There are also many other remarkable passages in the same prophet, that have a reference to, and were to have their accomplishment in some future time. But I shall take notice of no other passages

But that of *Malachy*, who expressly declares, *I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and*

and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: Behold he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts, Mal. iii. 1.

From these passages, and others of the like nature that might be mentioned, I think nothing appears more certain, than that the writings of the *Old Testament* are full of descriptions of some very great and good prince, that was, one time or other, to proceed from *David's* house, and to reign over God's people; who notwithstanding some sufferings he was to undergo, was yet to triumph over all his enemies; and under whose reign the knowledge of God, and the practice of righteousness, and the happiness of good men, was to become more extensive and flourishing than ever. — This is the *literal and natural sense* of the places I have cited, and not drawn from a *mystical or allegorical interpretation* of them.

It is also worth while to observe, how exact an agreement there is between the several descriptions that are given by these different authors. As they all

concur in predicting and expecting an happier state of things than ever had been in *Israël* before, so they do also as to all the circumstances of that time. As that it should be under the reign of a righteous King of *David's house*, who was to be a *covenant to the people*, and a *light to the Gentiles*; whose reign was to be remarkable for an extraordinary knowledge of God, the most plentiful effusion of God's spirit, a sincere and hearty obedience to the divine will, and that salvation that should be granted to the humble and contrite. This is evidently the happiness spoken of in the prophetick writings, and the agreement between them is so very exact, that one may be well assured that they either copied from one another, or rather that the several writers were directed by one and the same infallible spirit.

But 'tis also to our purpose to observe farther, that these prophecies relate principally to a *spiritual salvation* and deliverance, and not to a *temporal*: Or predict a real deliverance from ignorance and vice, and that knowledge and virtue should universally obtain, instead of victory over

over external enemies, and wordly grandeur and prosperity. It is but of little weight, what sort of salvation the Jews expected: The question is, what sort of deliverance God intended, and the scripture predicted? Why, *that a Branch should come out of Jesse, on whom the spirit of wisdom — knowledge — and of the fear of the Lord should rest; who was to reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, and to slay the wicked with the breath of his mouth,* Isai. xi. 1. &c. *A king shall reign in righteousness,* chap. xxxii. 1. And it shall come to pass in his time, that the mountain of the Lord's house — shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, Isai. ii. 2, 3. *In this day the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and every one that is left in Zion shall be called holy,* chap. 4. Then shall the spirit be poured from on high — judgment

shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field, and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, chap. xxxii. When God's spirit should be poured out upon all flesh, and all that should call on the name of the Lord should be saved, Joel ii. 27. When people should flow to the house of the Lord, and be taught of his ways, and walk in his paths, Micah iv. 1, 2. In this strain the prophetick descriptions generally run; and I think 'tis so far from being true, that the main thing predicted, in the *Messiah's* time, was a temporal deliverance and external worldly grandure, that to me there is nothing more evident, than that the prophecies refer mostly to a salvation of quite another nature.



C H A P VI.

Of the Jewish Interpretation of the Old Testament Scripture.



S the *Old Testament* scriptures do plainly contain predictions of future events, so 'tis observable that the *Jews*, in our Saviour's time, were so well apprised of this reference of the prophecies to some distant season, as that they unanimously applied many of them to the *Messiah*, and the time of his coming. There is nothing more certain, than that they were in continual expectation of the *Messiah's* appearance, at the time when *Jesus Christ* was in the world; which expectation was owing to what they found spoken

and intimated in the prophecies of the *Old Testament*; and because they imagined the time fixed for his appearance was at hand. Thus they gathered from several passages, That *Messiah* was to be the son of *David*, *Mat.* xxii. 4. That he was to be born in *Bethlehem*, *Mat.* ii. 5. to which purpose they applied *Micah* v. 2. That he was to be *David's Lord*, *Mat.* xxii. 45. for which they cited *Psal.* cx. 1. That he was to be a very great prophet, *Joh.* iv. 25. That he was to be the king of *Israel*, *Joh.* i. 49. That he was to abide for ever, *Joh.* xii. 34. Besides these instances, and more that might be brought from the *New Testament*, we also find that the *Chaldee* paraphraats, *Jonathan* and *Onkelos*, refer many passages of the *Old Testament* to the *Messiah*. Thus, that prophecy, *Gen.* iii. 15. was to be accomplished in the days of King *Messiah*, according to *Jonathan and the Hierusalem Targum*. And thus also they interpret *Gen.* xl ix. 10, 11, 12. *There shall not be wanting kings and governors of the house of Judah, and scribes from his seed to teach the law until*

until king Messiah shall come ; of whom they expound the whole remaining part of the prophecy, tho' evidently relating to *Judah*. And in this exposition *Onkelos* agrees with them. The *Psalms* 2, 21, 45, 61, 72, 81, 132. are in part, or whole, applied by the *Chaldee Paraphrase* to the same person. Thus also in *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Micah*, and *Zechariah*, * there are many passages applied by *Jonathan*, to the like purpose; which shews that in his Judgment, and according to the then opinion of the *Jews*, the *Messiah* was concerned in those prophecies, and that their accomplishment was to be in him.

Of these prophecies it may not be improper to observe, that some of them are the very same which the *New Testament* writers apply to our *Jesus*. Thus *Psal. 2.* and *45.* are applied by the *author to the Hebrews*, *chap. i. 5, 8, 9.* The prophecy of *Isaiah*, which *Matthew* refers to *Christ*, *Mat. i. 22,*

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33.

* Isai. iv. 2. ix. 6. x. 27. xi. 1---6. xiv. 29.
xvi. 1---5. xxviii. 5. xlvi. 1. xlvi. 10. lvi. 13.
lvi. 10. Jerem. xxviii. 5. xxx. 9. xxxiii. 15.
Hosea iii. 5. Micah iv. 8. v. 2. Zechar.
iii. 8. iv. 7.

23. is also in part applied to the *Messiah*, by *Jonathan*. See *Jonath.* Paraph. on *Isaiah* ix. 6. Compare also *Mat.* xii. 18. with the same paraphrase on *Isaiah* xlvi. 1, 2, 3. *John* xii. 38, with *Isai.* liii. 1. *Mat.* ii. 5, 6. with *Mic.* v. ii. And as for those others that are to be found in the *New Testament*, they are not so far distant from the plain sense of the prophecies, as they lye in the *Old Testament*, as many of those passages are, which *Jonathan* applies to the *Messiah*. See his paraphrase on *Psal.* xxi. 1 — 8. *Ixi.* 7, 8. *Ixxii.* 1. *Isai.* xi. 1—6. *xiv.* 29. *xvi.* 1—5. *xxviii.* 5. *Jer.* xxx. 9. *Mic.* iv. 8. *Zech.* iii. 8 iv. 7. From which places I am apt to think, that there was no remarkable prophecy, but the *Jews* apprehended it, some way or other, to belong to their *Messiah*.

I would ask our author, upon what scheme he will account for the application of these prophecies of the *Old Testament*, by the *Jews*, to the person and times of the *Messiah*, unless he allows that they really have a distant view; and that in the apprehension of the *Jews* they belonged to him? He is pleased indeed

deed to deny, p. 33. That any of the Jews, before the captivity, looked for a deliverer. I know not for what reasons. There are some very ancient testimonies against this assertion, and, I think, at least of equal credit with his. The Caldee *paraphraſt*, on *Isai.* lii. 13, 14. thus comments, כִּי־דָבְרֵינוּ לֵיהּ בַּתְּרִאֵל יִשְׁכַּן כְּפָרָאֵן. Behold my servant the Messiah shall prosper, he shall be exalted — even as the house of Israel have hoped for him many days. And Christ told his disciples; *Mat.* xiii. 7. That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. And in another place in particular, *John* viii. 56. That Abraham rejoiced to see his day. That he saw it, and was glad. And one of his apostles tells us, *Joh.* xi. 41. that Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him. And one ancienter than these, by calling the Messiah the desire of all nations, *Hag.* ii. 7. very strongly intimates that he was the desire of their own: Which is also positively asserted

ed by another ancient author, who speaks of him, *as the Lord whom they sought, and that messenger of the covenant, in whom they delighted.* Mal. iii. 1. The former passages shew the expectations of the Jews before the captivity : The latter, their desires and expectations, just after they were returned from it.

But whether any before the captivity expected a deliverer or not, how came the Jews to form such expectations after it ; and even to be so possessed with this hope, as to be ready to fall in with every person, that made pretensions to such a character ? Was it not owing to the then generally received interpretations of the scriptures by their teachers, and of consequence to the plain intimations of the sacred writings themselves, and because the current of the *Old Testament* scriptures naturally induc'd them to such a persuasion ? If our author will deny that the *Old Testament* scriptures, as they were read and understood after the captivity, had any manifest reference to a future deliverer, this universal strong expectation of the
jewish

jewiſh nation is perfectly unaccountable upon any other ſuppoſition, than that of a ſpecial influence of divine providence, leading them to ſuch a belief, as the time of his appearance drew nearer on: Or if he allows that the *Old Testament* writings, as they then appeared, did carry plain intimations of the coming of this extraordinary perſon; and objecls that *Esdras*, and the *priests* with him, altered and added to the ancient prophecies, and gave them that reference which they now ſeem to carry to the times of the *Meffiah*, I would ask him, Were thoſe additions and alterations of *Esdras*, made by the direcſion of God to him? Then, as they now stand, they are prophecies of the *Meffiah*, and were to have their full completion in him: If *Esdras* did it without any ſuch ſupernatural Aſſitance, then our author muſt account for one very great diſſiculty, viz. How *Esdras* could, at ſuch a diſtance of time, pretend to foretel the coming of a *deliverer* to the *Jews*, that God had given him no reaſon to expecl, and almost fix the very time of his appearance, and give the moſt particular descriptions

descriptions of his person, doctrines, works, disgrace and glory, and entire undertakings; and how the event should so exactly correspond with such random guesses and conjectures. Certainly to prophecy, in so very extraordinary a manner, about such a variety of important events, without the gift of prophecy, is a much more unaccountable supposition, than that of the gift of prophecy itself.





C H A P. VII.

Of the double Sense of
Prophecies.

A M ready to allow the author of the *Grounds*, &c. That the prophecies applied by the *New Testament* writers to *Christ* might, in part, relate also to the times wherein they were first delivered. This I think is evidently true of that passage in *Isaiah*; the first part of which, c. 7. belongs more immediately to the deliverance, that was to come to pass within two years after the birth of *Isaiah's* child; the latter part, cap. 9. to the more distant times of the *Messiah*, who was to be the glory and support of *David's* throne and family. And therefore I add,

That

That there is no absurdity in the supposition, that as some prophecies may relate wholly to the times of the *Messiah*, so others may relate partly to his times, and partly to the times wherein they were delivered. God may order his prophets to speak in such words, as may denote a double event, and require a double accomplishment : Or a message may be so expressed, as that the different parts of it, not the same words, may relate to very different seasons. These are two distinct Considerations.

As to the first, God's ordering a prophet to deliver himself in such words, as that they may literally denote a double event, let it be considered, That the *literal sense is*, either that sense, which the words naturally bare in connection ; or which, tho' it may not be the most obvious, and natural, yet the words will bare, and the speaker of them really intends. That words may bare a double sense, and be as properly expressive of one as another, is undeniably certain. Instances enough of this may be produced out of the *Old Testament*. Thus *a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son*, as naturally

rally signifies, That an untouched maid should, by an extraordinary providence, become the mother of a child, as that a young woman should be married, and prove with child by her husband. *Out of Ægypt have I called my son,* there is nothing in the expression itself, to confine it rather to the *jewish nation, than to Jesus Christ.* The one is as much the literal sense as the other ; and which sense is intended, whether one or both can only be known, either by its connection with other things, or by the plain and express declaration of the speaker. And this latter way is the most certain and infallible. And this is the authority we pretend to have as *christians*, for interpreting many of the *Old Testament* prophecies of *Christ* ; those especially which he applies to himself, and those referred to him by his apostles, as proper proofs of his being the *Messiah* ; whatever reference they originally had, or may now be supposed to have to the times when they were first uttered. For as there is reason to think that the persons, who anciently delivered these prophecies, *spake as they were moved by the spirit of God,*

God; so there is equal, if not stronger evidence, that those who apply them to *Christ*, as the proper proofs of his being the *Messiah*, were under the same divine influence; and that therefore they would never have urged them as real proofs of events, they were never intended to predict: Tho' I think there are but few instances of this nature to be found.

As to the latter, that the different parts of the same prophecy may denote different events, this is a much more easy and probable supposition than the former: Especially if there be an agreement between the events themselves, and the more important event of the two, tho' at a distance, was necessary to be preserved in the minds of those to whom the prophecy is delivered, the transition from the one to the other is very natural and proper. That mankind should be saved from the power of vice, and the dominion of evil spirits, and recovered by a Saviour to peace with God, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance, is a much more glorious work, than the salvation of a particular nation from temporal evils, or their having conferred on them

them any temporal prosperity. And therefore what could be more worthy of God, or agreeable to his wisdom, than to put his people in mind, when he raised them up any temporal Saviours, that the time should come, when he would send into the world one, that should be the author of a more glorious redemption, by causing righteousness, peace, and knowledge, more universally to flourish, and procuring for them everlasting salvation.

It doth indeed seem necessary, that when two events are referred to in the same prophecies, the double intention of such prophecies should be *generally* understood; otherwise the prophecies, as to one sense of them at least, would be of no use; it being almost the same thing, not to foretel a future event at all, as to foretel it in such a manner, as that no one is capable of understanding it. But this is not the case of the *jewish* prophecies, which, as they had a plain reference to the *Messiah*, in part, as well as in part to events nearer at hand, so were *also* understood by the *Jews*, as respecting him; as I have proved, *chap.*

v, vi. And therefore 'tis only needful, upon this head, to add, that as many of them evidently had a double signification, so they had also a double use and design : The one, to assure the *Jews* of God's present protection, notwithstanding the calamitous circumstances they were under : The other, to preserve alive in their minds the hopes of the *Messiah*, and of better times to succeed under him. Indeed every promise of the *Messiah*, how far distant soever the time of his coming might be, was, nevertheless, a mighty encouragement to the faithful *Jews*. For this was giving them the strongest assurance, that, tho' for the present they might be reduced very low, yet they should not be utterly destroyed, because of the *Messiah* that was to proceed from them : And of consequence those prophecies had a noble use, and could not be wholly fulfilled, according to the literal sense of them, or in the sense the words will bare, and the author of them intended, in any other person than the *Messiah*; and the application of such passages to him, will not be in a mystical,

stical, allegorical sense, but in their natural and proper meaning, as they stand in the Old Testament writings.

To suppose, that those prophecies were not intended of God to refer at all to the times of the *Messiah*, and that, according to the *literal sense*, they are in no wise applicable to him ; and yet that they are nevertheless applied by *Jesus*, and his apostles, to himself, argues either that the *Jews*, in the time of *Christ*, were very strangely mistaken in their interpretation of their own scriptures ; or that *Jesus*, and his apostles, put a false sense on them, and contrary to what they were generally understood to mean ; or that they never quoted them as real proofs of *Christ's* being the *Messiah*, but only *by way of accommodation*, and as one would cite the words of any other author whatsoever. As to the first, I think nothing is more evident, than that the *Old Testament* writings were so framed, as must necessarily have lead any one, acquainted with them, to interpret many passages of some other time, and person, than any they might, in part,

refer to, just when they were delivered; and therefore, having never seen the things spoken of fully accomplished, the *Jews* might reasonably refer them to, and expect the intire completion of them in the person of the *Messiah*. And this in fact was, as I have shewn, the judgment and practice both of the ancient and modern *Jews*. That our Saviour and his apostles put a false sense on the scriptures, and contrary to the generally received interpretation, cannot be allowed, consistent with their characters, as inspired persons, or their conduct as wise men; it being impossible that this could have done them any service amongst the *Jews*, who had the highest veneration for their sacred writings, and for the interpretation given of them, by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in our Saviour's time. And as to their never quoting of them, as real proofs of things to happen to the *Messiah*, I think the contrary is most evidently certain; our Saviour himself, and his apostles after him, often appealing to the scriptures, that the things they preached ought to have been so. It therefore follows,
that

that these passages, they cited as real proofs, were properly and pertinently applied, and did belong to the *Messiah*, in their natural literal sense, as they stand in the Old Testament, notwithstanding any reference they might have to any person then in being, or shortly to come, after the prophecies were first delivered.

I might instance here in the frequent appeals made to the *Old Testament*, to shew how the death and resurrection of *Christ*, and the calling of the *Gentiles*, were agreeable to the most plain declarations of the scriptures. But I rather choose to insist on a passage, which the author of the *Grounds*, &c. tells us, cannot be applied to *Jesus Christ*, without very great absurdity, and contrary to the very design and intent of the prophet, p. 42. and shall I think demonstrate, that tho' it might, in part, belong to *Isaiah's child*, yet that it must also be supposed to refer to the *Messiah*, in order to its full, literal accomplishment, and to answer the design of the prophecy itself. And this will shew, that some prophecies at least

have a double meaning, and that 'tis sometimes necessary it should be so. It is that famous prophecy of *Isaiah*, chap. vii. 14. which St. Matthew i. 22, 23. refers to the birth of *Christ*; tho' it doth not appear, that he cites it as a real prediction, or proper proof. *Bethold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.* The occasion of this prophecy was the confederacy of *Rosin*, king of *Syria*, with *Pekah*, king of *Israel*, against *Abaz* king of *Judah*, and their design to destroy the royal family of *David*, and to settle the crown of *Judah* on *Tabeal*, and his family. See verses 1, 5, 6. Now had this design taken effect, besides all the miseries that had been brought on the kingdom of *Judah*, all the particular promises made to the family of *David*, and of consequence that of the *Messiah*, had been entirely lost. And therefore God was pleased, in order to support the house of *David*, see verses 2, 13. under the fears of this invasion, and against all such like attempts for the future, to give them a sign, both of a present deliverance

liverance, and of the perpetual establishment of *David's* throne and kingdom. See *Isaiah ix. 7.* The sign of both was to be the birth of a child. See *chap. vii. 14, 15, 16.* and *chap. ix. 6.* And therefore, as a virgin's conceiving, and baring a son, seven hundred years after the prophecy was given, could be no possible sign to *Ahaz* of a present deliverance; so neither could the birth of a male child, to be born within a year or two, be looked on as a sufficient security, for the perpetual establishment of *David's* throne and kingdom. That the words, as they stand in *Isaiah*, do, in their obvious literal sense, partly relate to a young woman, in the days of *Ahaz*, our author needed not have taken so much pains to prove. This, I believe, no one ever so much as doubted. But what I farther insist on is, that this prophecy must also, in part, refer to some other child, to be born long after the time of *Ahaz*, and that therefore it must necessarily have a double sense, in order to answer the design of it, and to have its full and proper accomplishment. And that it hath so

evident from the words themselves, some of which can in no sense be applicable to *Isaiah's* child. For this prophecy reaches to the end of *chap.* ix. as is evident from the whole context. In *chap.* viii 3. we find one part of the prophecy fulfilled, in the son born to *Isaiah* by the prophetess; and God assures him, ver. 4. that *before the child should be able to speak, both Damascus and Samaria should be plundered by the king of Assyria*; upon which, ver. 18. the prophet cries out, *Behold I and the children, whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel.* However, in the remaining part of the chapter, he goes on to declare the miseries that should fall on the *Jews* for their sins, notwithstanding this present deliverance of *Ahaz*; and therefore to preserve them from being quite dejected, God was pleased to give them some foundation for hope, by assuring them of a great deliverance that should hereafter be vouchsafed them; and then appeals to a sign of the same nature, with that spoken of before, *chap.* vii. 14. and describes it in such a manner,

as

as that one would certainly conclude it to be the individual child, mentioned in the former place, were it not for some particular descriptions, that necessarily imply a nobler birth than that. *Unto us a child is born: Unto us a son is given.* i. e. As certainly as *Isaiah's* child, by the prophetess, shall be born, whose birth is to be the sign of their deliverance from this invasion, so also a child shall hereafter be born, *of the increase of whose government and peace, upon the throne of David and his kingdom, to order and establish it with judgment and with justice, there shall be no end.* After which assurance the prophet returns to the particular occasion that introduced this prophecy, *viz.* the deliverance of *Judah*, and the *house of David*, from the power of *Pekah*, and of *Resin*. See *chap. ix. 9, 11, 12.* Now as the birth of *Isaiah's* child was certainly miraculous, as ordered and predicted by God, so there is no absurdity in supposing, that the same words, *chap. vii. 14.* which predicted in so extraordinary a manner this birth, might also be a prediction of the much more wonderful

wonderful birth of him, who was not only to be the sign of the establishment of *David's* house, but the great author of its continuance and glory ; even upon the supposition that this sense of this part of the prophecy could not be understood, 'till the accomplishment of it. And what inclines me the rather to think thus is, that then this prophecy will be an explication of that original promise given to our first parents, *The seed of woman*, &c. One can scarce imagine any other reason of such an extraordinary character, as this of the *woman's seed*, but that the person denoted by this expression should come from a woman, without the concurrence and help of a man.

From hence I hope it will appear, that even this part of the prophecy, *Isa.* vii. 14. may be understood of the *Messiah*, and therefore of *Christ*, consilient with its main design and intention. Sure I am that the other part of it contained, *C. ix. 6, 7.* cannot, without a manifest violence to the words, be applied to *Isaiah's* child ; nor to *Hezekiah*, as *Grotius* and *White* expound them ; nor indeed

deed to any other child, but *Jesus Christ*, to whom the *first part* of the prophecy is *truly* applicable ; and in whom *alone* the *last part of it* is verified and accomplished. And as the birth of *Isaiah's* son, and the consequent deliverance of *Judah* from the threatened invasion, both happened according to God's prediction ; so they had reason to believe, from this experience of his faithfulness and power, that notwithstanding the present low circumstances of *David's* family, yet that some time or other, a child should be born, that should restore the glory of his house, and in whom the kingdom should be for ever established. So that as the child spoken of was to be a sign of a present deliverance, and of the perpetual establishment of *David's* house and throne, it was so far from being useless to *Ahaz*, and absurd in itself, that the prophecy should refer to the times of the *Messiah*, that it would indeed be absurd to suppose that it should not ; and therefore it is with justice applied by St. *Matthew* to *Christ*.

And

And I wish this author, for his own sake, would more impartially study, and honestly represent scripture passages, before he ventures to charge them with *absurdities*. I cannot help saying, tho' I wish him a better spirit, that his general method of quoting authors shews, either that he hath never read them, or that he doth not understand them, or which I am loath to believe of any man, does willfully mis-represent them. When he speaks of scripture at least, instead of acting the part of a fair objector, he dresses it up in the most ridiculous manner he is able, and then declaims against it, as something very absurd and unreasonable ; and when one expects to find some authority for his assertions from his quotations, the passages prove directly the contrary ; as will afterwards more evidently appear.

From what hath been said on this head, I hope it doth not seem so great an absurdity, to suppose that prophecies may have a double reference, and infer a double accomplishment;

ment. For as, in both senses, they had a tendency to confirm the faithful Jews in the belief of God's providence, and the hopes of his mercy, and the happy state of his people, under the righteous reign and government of the *Messiah*, it was therefore consistent with the divine wisdom they should have this double reference, and accomplishment. And this will appear yet still more evident, to any one that considers the dependence which the most antient promises and prophecies of the *Old Testament* have upon each other. God promises a *deliverance* to our first parents from the serpents power. He afterwards assures Abraham, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Jacob prophecies that Shilow should come, to whom should be the gathering of the people. Moses foretels the coming of a great and mighty prophet that should arise to the Jews from amongst themselves. Was it not reasonable to suppose, that as God had thus limited the promise of this great blessing, made from the foundation of the world, to this nation; so that he would take care

care that they should not forget this promise to them; and that upon all occasions he would put them in mind of that great and universal blessing he intended them; and improve every temporal deliverance he vouchsafed them, to the raising their expectation of a nobler deliverance yet to come. Upon this scheme, tis no wonder, that some prophecies should be of a mixed nature, and that *Isaiah*, and the rest of sacred writers, should be directed to speak in such a manner, as to predict events near at hand, and also at a farther distance; especially as the former were pledges and assurances of the latter and greater. †

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† A late ingenious Author || thinks this double sense of prophecies not so easily defensible. He tells us, *That prophecies so interpreted [as having a double sense] do afford no argument for any cause, since we cannot certainly discover them to have such a double sense, till this be shewn by other inspired Men, whose authority is there supposed, whereas tis the very thing in question.* This is plausibly argued, if he means a double sense intended by the very same words of the same prophecy; of which senses one only is plain and obvious, and the other such as would never have been thought of, had it not been declared by a person

|| *The True Grounds and Reasons, &c. p. 117. 118.*

The reader will forgive me, if I have been a little tedious on this head, a great deal of the present controversy

person pretending to inspiration ; tho I think not altogether justly. For should any person, pretending to inspiration, give any new explication of prophecies, which, tho not so very obvious, yet was not contrary to the sense of the words of the prophecy, I think the first enquiry in order of nature would be, concerning the proofs of his inspiration ; and if these appear to be sufficient, we must allow his interpretations of scripture to be good : Tho I freely own, it doth not appear probable, that prophecies in general should be intended to carry a double sense, and yet that there should be need of a new revelation to lead us into the knowledge of one of them ; especially the principal one, as in the present case, said to be intended. But tis a quite different thing, when the several parts of the prophecies relate to different events, and are so expressed, as to lead into this double sense ; as in the passage I have been considering, and indeed most of the prophecies of the *Old Testament* ; which seem generally to be of a mixed nature, and to refer partly to the then present, and partly to some future time ; which nevertheless were delivered in such a manner, as that both the views of providence were easy to be understood, and seem to have been generally apprehended by those, to whom they were first delivered, as well as by those that came after them : And therefore we may justly argue, that they were well applied by Christ and his *apostles*, not because they, as inspired persons, did actually apply them, but because they were originally designed as real predictions of those events, they are urged as proofs of, and did very plainly foretel them.

verfy depending on the right stating and understanding of this matter. I shall only beg his farther patience to observe, with what justice and honesty this writer compares the prophecies of the *Old Testament* with the divinations and dreams of the *pagans*; insinuating that *christianity* as supported by these prophecies, hath no better foundation than the worst religions of the heathens. The heathen oracles were delivered in the name of those, whom I believe our author will readily confess to be idols and not gods. Their divinations and prophecies were built on the flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, and such like superstitions; and therefore no wonder their predictions were obscure and uncertain; and incapable of pointing out any one single particular event, since they were not directed by an infallible spirit. Whereas the prophecies of the *Old Testament* were delivered in the name of the one God, the creator of heaven and earth, and were plain absolute predictions of future events; many of which actually came to pass, exactly in the time

time fixed ; and of the accomplishment of which, those to whom the prophecies were delivered were witnesses : From whence they had reason to conclude, that others, tho' relating to more distant times, should, in like manner, be verified in their proper season. And as they were literally fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*, who was *approved by signs and wonders and miracles of the Holy Ghost* to be a real prophet, it was a demonstrative proof of his being the true *Messiah*, and is a sufficient reason for our believing in him, and submitting to him as such ; as will be more largely shewn in the ensuing chapter.





C H A P. VIII.

The Old Testament Prophecies fulfilled in CHRIST, and in Him only.



S Many of the *Old Testament* prophecies have manifestly a double reference, and were, by the *Jews* themselves, applied in part to the *Messiah*, so several of them were never, *according to the letter, and as they stand in the prophetick writings*, verified in any person then in being, when they were first delivered; nor in any one since, as far as we can learn from history, but *Jesus Christ*, who applied them to himself, and in whom they are accomplished in their true extent, according to the *New Testament* account of

of him. And therefore thus far at least the *Old* and *New Testament* are not in an irreconcileable state, but have an entire agreement and connection with each other ; and therefore in this respect the prophecies are a confirmation of *christianity*. Thus the first and leading promise of all, and to confirm and illustrate which, the ensuing ones seem to have been given, *Gen.* iii. 15. *I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,* seems to have a real accomplishment in *Jesus Christ*. The account the evangelists give of his birth answers to the character of *the woman's seed*. The *bruising of his heel*, whatsoever may be the full meaning of it, yet plainly denotes some lesser hurt that was to come to this *seed of the woman* by the *serpent*; which was verified in the sufferings and death of *Christ*; according to his words, *Luke xxii. 53. This is your hour, and the power of darkness.* But notwithstanding this, he was at last to *bruise the serpent's head*; i. e. utterly to abolish and destroy his power. And what less than this was

the declared effect of Jesus's death and resurrection? Note, faith Christ, is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, Luke xii. 31. And one of his apostles, after him, tells us, That he took part of flesh and blood, that thro' death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, Heb. ii. 14. And as to the enmity spoken of, 'tis so very plain, by every days experience, that I need give no particular instances of it. The same also may be demonstrated of that promise of God to Abraham, That in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, which was never verified in any one person 'till the times of Jesus. The Jews had kings and priests, and prophets, that were very great blessings to their own particular nation: But none of them could, in any true, or literal sense, be said to be universal blessings, 'till the appearance of Christ; who, according to the New Testament scheme, is the Saviour of all men, and under whom there is no more difference of Jew and Greek, but one Lord over all, who is rich in mercy to all that call on him. Nor can those

those words of *Moses*, *Deut.* xviii. 18. be, with any justice, applied to *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, or any of the succeeding prophets, who in no respects could be said to be *like unto Moses*, either as to the miracles they wrought, or the end and design of their mission from God. But they were literally accomplished in *Jesus Christ*, who *did the works that never man did*, and who was the author of a new dispensation, as *Moses* was, tho' of a much more excellent and perfect one; and who wrought out a deliverance for his people, as *Moses* did, tho' a much more beneficial and glorious one.

In the *Psalms* there are many passages of this nature, which cannot be interpreted, with any sense, or appearance of truth, unless they are supposed to refer to some future season, and to have their proper accomplishment in some other person, than any living at the time when they were penned, and which do all of them exactly agree with the *New Testament* account of *Christ*. The 2^d *Psalms* is an instance of this, which, tho' in many things it may relate to *David's* or *Solomon's* establishment on the throne,

yet in others cannot be applied to either of them, without the greatest hyperbole and violence. The whole of it is penned in such terms, as manifestly describe some greater person than *David*, or any other of the petty kings of the little territory of *Judea*; and the inheritance to be given him was such, as no king, that ever arose in *Judea*, was possessed of, except *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David, and the king of Israel, to whom all things are put in subjection, he only excepted who did put all things under him.* Of him also, and of him only, those words, *Psal. xlvi.* are literally true : *Thy throne O God is for ever and ever, the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter. — God thy God, hath anointed thee with the oyl of gladness above thy fellows.* Of what mortal man, of what *jewish* prince much less, can these words in any tolerable sense be true? Which of them possessed an everlasting throne, or such vast dominions as to be worthy the name of God? Or had so prosperous a state, as to be superiour to all his fellows? But how exactly agreeable are these to the *New Testament*

Testament descriptions of Christ, who is made both Lord and King, whose throne is exalted above angels, and of whose rule and government there shall be no end. And to mention no more out of the *Psalms*, let this writer explain, if he can, who was that *Lord of David*, to whom *the Lord said, set thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Thou shalt rule in the midst of thy enemies.* *The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou are a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek, Psal. cx.* Let him shew, if he is able, one instance, in whom, by God's special appointment, the regal and sacerdotal dignities were united, and still continue to be united. If not, he must acknowledge that the *christian scheme* furnishes us with an entire accomplishment of this prophecy, in the person of *Jesus, who is the great high priest of our profession, and who must reign as king, 'till all his enemies are put under his feet.*

To mention all the passages out of *Isaiah*, and the other prophets, to this purpose, would be to transcribe their

books. I have already given an instance of this, in that passage of *Isaiah* vii. 13. applied by *Matthew* to *Christ*, chap. i. 22, 23. and I think shewn, that in the literal and obvious sense, the whole of it may justly be referred to the *Messiah*, and that part of it can be applied to no one else. And therefore all the authorities which the author of the *Grounds*, &c. quotes to prove the contrary, and to shew his great reading and learning, might as well have been spared. The most exalted characters of that prophecy, such as *the wonderful councellour, the prince of peace, the mighty God, the father of the future age*, are answered by those descriptions of *Christ*, under the *New Testament*; as that *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, *Coloss.* ii. 3. that he hath reconciled us unto God, and preached peace to them that were afar off, *Eph.* ii. 16, 17. that he was God manifested in the flesh, *1 Tim.* iii. 16. and that of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named, *Eph.* iii. 15. and therefore 'tis no wonder that other parts of this famous

mous prophecy, that do agree to him, should be applied to him by his apostles. See the description given of the Branch, *that was to come out of the roots of Jesse, upon whom the spirit of the Lord was to rest, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, who with righteousness was to judge the poor,* under whose reign the fiercest natures were to be softned, and the most savage and cruel dispositions were to be rendred innocent and harmless; *who was to be an ensign to the people, and to whom the Gentiles were to seek, and by whom the remnant of God's people from the most distant nations, were to be recovered, Isa. xi.* Was there any one of the house of David, in Isaiah's time, or that can be named since, of whom these things can be, with any shew of truth, affirmed? events so very remarkable, that whenever they were to happen could not be concealed. Let our author then acknowledge, that this prophecy hath a farther reference, than to the time when it was first delivered; and if he can fix on any one person, from the hour *Isaiah* spoke these words to

to the time of *Jesus*, in whom they were, either as to the general sense, or literal meaning of them, properly accomplished, and I could almost promise to become a convert to his principles, how much soever at present I dislike them. But how exactly doth every part of the description answer to the character of *Jesus* and his religion ; who was himself of the house of *David*, who had the spirit of God in the most excellent manner, who hath taught us to govern our passions, to look on every man as our brother, to forgive our enemies, by whom the *Gentiles* obtain salvation, and in whom both *Jews* and *Gentiles* have believed, in the most distant parts of the earth. The 35, 42, 49. Chapters of the same prophecy, and many other passages of the like nature, are instances to the same purpose ; where the working of miracles, the gathering of the *Gentiles*, and the exaltation of *one to be king and ruler, whom man despised, and the nation abhorred*, are spoken of: And in as much as these things were not then verified in any one living, they must

must be allowed to be prophetick descriptions of some future times, and even to be accomplished in *Jesus Christ* according to the new testament account ; and that not in a mystical and allegorical sense, but in their natural and literal meaning, as they stand in the old testament writings.

These passages which I have now quoted, have their principal reference to the prosperity and glory of the *Messiah's kingdom*. In the last cited chapter indeed mention is plainly made of his being *rejected and despised*, of his *labouring in vain, and spending his strength for nought* ; of his being *abhorred by the nation*, and *becoming a servant of rulers* ; even of the same person are these things spoken, who was nevertheless *to raise up the tribes of Jacob, to restore the preserved of Israel, that was to be a light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation to the ends of the earth* ; *whom kings were to see, and princes to worship* ; *who was to be for a covenant to the people, and to establish the earth, and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages*.

A strange mixture this in the character and circumstances of the same person ! That he should be *a man abhorred of the nation*, and yet *for a salvation to the ends of the earth* ; that he should be *a servant of rulers*, and yet *a victorious prince* ; that he should *spend his strength for nought*, and yet *restore the preserved of Israel, and become a light to the Gentiles* ! In like manner doth the same prophet elsewhere describe him ; as one *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, as one *stricken and smitten of GOD and afflicted*, as one *brought like a lamb to the slaughter, taken from prison and judgment, and cut off out of the land of the living*. And yet this same person was to *prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD was to prosper in his hands* ; he was to *see of the travel of his soul and be satisfied, and to have a portion divided him with the great, and to divide the spoil with the strong* ; and that for this very reason, because he *poured out his soul unto death, and made intercession for the*

the transgressors. Surely if these words have a plain literal meaning, they must signify, that the same person was to suffer and dye, and yet to reign and prosper ; to be a triumphant conqueror, an Intercessor and Saviour. And where among the Jews will this author find a person, in whom all these different discriptions meet. Strain them ever so far, they can never be applied to *Isaiah*, or any other person, but *JESUS of Nazareth*, but in such a strange figurative manner, as our author, who seems to be mighty zealous for the literal sense, must think contrary to common sense and reason. But in our blessed saviour, how exactly and literally are they accomplished ; who tho' despised by his nation, yet became an universal blessing to mankind ; tho' abhorred of men was adored by princes ; tho' crucified and slain, yet prolonged his days ; and for his *once suffering of death*, was declared to be the author of eternal salvation. And that these things where to happen to the *Messiah*, *Daniel* more expressly declares, *Chap. ix. 25, 26, 27.*

After

After threescore and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

A prophecy so plain, and so exactly made good in Christ, that the Jews, to evade the force of it, are under the necessity of having recourse to a double *Messiah*, one of which was to suffer, and the other to reign and live for ever: A supposition that hath not one single text of scripture to support it. And as for our author, instead of attempting to shew how this passage answers to any other event, but the death of Christ, he slightly passes it over, by telling us, that *Dodwell*, and *Sir John Marsham* refer even this famous prophecy about the weeks to the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. p. 49. But have they produced any probable instance to which this passage will entirely agree; or can our author shew any one that pretended to be the *Messiah*, in the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, that was cut

cut off, but not for himself, and the consequence of which was the destruction of the Jewish city and sanctuary, and an universal desolation. The authority of *Dodwell* and Sir *John Marsham* will signify little without proof; nor have they shewn any person, to whom this entire passage is literally applicable. But all things exactly agree to *Jesus of Nazareth*, who took on him the character of the *Messiah*; who *was slain*, but *not for himself*; who prophesied of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which came to pass under *Titus Vespasian*, who burnt the city and sanctuary, and who was the instrument of the divine vengeance upon that impious nation, for *crucifying the Lord of life and glory*.

These prophecies that I have mentioned relate to the character of the *Messiah*, and describe the principal events that were to befall him. There are others that point out the particular time, or season of his appearance, which exactly answer to the time of our Saviours appearance in the world, and agree to no one else but him.

Thus

Thus that famous prophecy of *Jacob*, concerning his son *Judah*, in whatever sense it be taken, exactly agrees with the season in which *Jesus of Nazareth* dwelt on in earth. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*, Gen. ix. 10. The literal and most obvious meaning of the words is this, that the tribe of *Judah* should never loose its authority, power and government, after its having once received it, till the coming of a certain person called *Shiloh*, and that he should some way or other gather the people, or nations to himself. The principal thing predicted is, the coming of *Shiloh*, and that the time of it should be before *Judah* should cease to be a distinct government; but however, at the decline of its authority and power, and that he should gather the people to himself. So that if ever *Shiloh* came, it must be before, but not long before, the *jewish* power was destroyed. But what person was there, that pretended to any extraordinary

extraordinary character, and gathered the people to himself, at this season, but *Jesus Christ*; after whose resurrection, the scepter did soon depart entirely from *Judah*, and who gathered both *Jews* and *Gentiles* into one church, under himself, their proper head and governour? *Daniel's* prophecy about the weeks is also shewn by Dr. *Prideaux* to accord exactly to the time of *Christ*. And as for *Haggai* and *Malachy* they do expressly declare, that the *desire of all nations, the messenger of the covenant* should come during the standing of the second temple; prophecies that have not had the shadow of an accomplishment, but in *Jesus Christ*. And the *Jews* themselves are so sensible of the strength of this argument, that they are forced to alledge the sins of the people, as a reason, why God hath deferred the coming of the *Messiah* beyond the time expressly fixed by the prophets. Thus the *Chaldee* paraphraast on *Micah*, v. 8. thus comments. Oh thou the *Messiah* of Israel קָרְבָּן הוּבָי בְּנֵשְׁתָא רְצִיוֹן who art bid because of the sins of the congregation of Zion, to thee

shall come the kingdom : Hereby rather charging God, and their own prophets, with falsehood, than own the accomplishment of the prophecies in *Jesus Christ* ; and submit to his authority and government.





C H A P I X.

*Of the Corruption of
S C R I P T U R E.*



HE argument drawn from the several passages cited in the foregoing chapter when put together, and giving light to each other, is this: That the sacred books of the *Jews*, tho' penned by different persons, and at distances of time very remote from each other, yet contain plain predictions of things that were not to come to pass till after ages; that they all unanimously agree in describing a certain person, that was to come from *Judah's* tribe, and from *David's* family; who, tho' he was, for a while, to be subject to great disgrace and grie-

vous sufferings, yet was to reign in righteousness, to overcome all his enemies, to bring redemption to his people, to be a light to the *Gentiles*, and God's salvation to the end of the earth ; that he was to come before, tho' but a little before the desolation of the *jewish* government and polity ; and during the standing of the second temple ; that about this time the *Jews* were in great expectation of such a Saviour ; and that at this very season there did actually arise a person, who, by the sanctity of his life, the excellency of his doctrines, and the greatness of his miracles, did prove himself to be sent of God ; that he did declare himself also to be the person intended in these prophetick descriptions ; that these descriptions, tho' in some things seemingly repugnant to each other, yet were exactly accomplished in him, as far as they related to his person, and the particular time of his appearance ; or as far as they then could be, or were intended to be accomplished, and which therefore appear plainly reconcileable to each other ; that there is not one single circumstance that renders

renders the accomplishment of more distant prophecies, in him, impossible or unlikely ; and that these prophetick descriptions, were interspersed and mixed with other plain predictions, that were actually verified and accomplished in their proper seasons. This I say is the argument : And what is the thing to be proved by it ? Not the *divine mission* of *Jesus Christ*, which doth not stand on the foundation of prophecy ; but the *Messiahship* of *Jesus*, or that he was this particular person spoken off in the *jewiſh* writings ; which must be proved by prophecy, and which cannot be so well proved by any other arguments whatsoever. And I think the argument in this light is so strong and conclusive, as that it cannot be evaded but by supposing, as our author frankly confesses he doth, that the writings of the *Old Testament* have been corrupted ; and that there have been so many interpolations, as that one can scarce know any thing of the original books, by what we have remaining now. Supposing it then for true, that there are some very great corruptions in the *Old Testament* writings,

this will do our author's cause no service, unless he can prove that they were made by *christians*, and that the predictions relating to *Christ*, were made after the event; for the manifest agreement and correspondence of the events recorded in the *New Testament* writings, to the things predicted in the *Old*, will give such a credit to *christianity*, as the enemies of it will never be able to weaken, unless they can prove that the predictions were forged, and inserted into the *jewish* writings, after the event. And this seems to be our author's supposition, tho' he elsewhere contradicts himself, p. 112. &c. For he tells us plainly, p. 45. *That the great clearness of prophecies hath ever been deemed a mark among intelligent people, whether believers or unbelievers in prophecy, that they have been made after the event.* I doubt not but our author is one of these *very intelligent* persons, and a thro' unbeliever in prophecies; and firmly determined to account all the prophetick passages of the *Old Testament* forged and interpolated, that have a plain and manifest reference to,

to, and accomplishment in *Jesus Christ*; tho' I confess, I do not understand (our authour, in his *great intelligence*, may inform us) how a person can be a believer in prophecy, and yet believe every plain prophecy made after the event. However, he hath taken care to preclude all possibility of being convinced himself of the truth of prophecies, and is so extraordinary *intelligent*, as to resolve to persevere, at all hazards, in his infidelity. If there be any difficulty or obscurity in prophecies, and their application to their particular events doth not seem so very natural and easy, then he is so *intelligent* as to think them only *allegorical, mystical, typical proofs*, i. e. that they prove just nothing at all: But if they are plain and easy to be understood, and do clearly presignify the coming of any future event, why then also it seems that *intelligent persons* think them *forged, and made after the event.*

Tantamne rem tam negligenter?
Do *intelligent persons* use to judge thus without sufficient reason, or contrary to the plain appearance of evidence? Will

our author himself affirm, that all the passages of the *Old Testament*, that now seem to have a reference to, and their accomplishment in *Jesus Christ*, are meer interpolations ? Let him then give some probable reasons when, and by whom these interpolations were made ; and particularly that they were made after the event. 'Tis allowed that plain prophecies, with their exact completions, are not matters very credible, without very good attestation, p. 137 ; tho' this is no very extraordinay discovery of our author's, since persons of common *intelligence* know, that as the belief of all past facts depends on testimony, so those facts will be more or less credible, according to the nature and weight of such testimony. But I cannot agree with him when he tells us *Ibid* : *That it seems most natural, upon the first view of a prophecy plainly fulfilled, to suppose the prophecy made for the sake of the event, or both prophecy and event invented.* This it seems is his unprejudiced unbyassed way of thinking and acting, to pass his judgment before enquiry, and to condemn all

all prophecies as cheats, without examining whether or no they are real. Other persons, *of less intelligence than our author*, would possibly think themselves obliged, before they made any determination at all, to enquire, when the things, said to be prophecies, were delivered, and when their accomplishment is said to have happened, and to consider the agreement between the prediction and its completion. If they find the same proof and evidence that the prediction was prior to the accomplishment, that they do for the difference of time between any other two ancient facts, I think that they will be under the same obligation to believe one as well as the other, or else testimony must never be allowed to be a sufficient reason for belief, and so past facts obtain no credit amongst men.

But however, our author will have it, p. 135. *That the books of the Old Testament are greatly corrupted. i. e. greatly changed from what they were, when they proceeded from the authors of them.* I own many literal errors may have happened thro' frequency of transcribing,

transcribing, as happens also to all other ancient books. But the question is not as to this, but whether the *Old Testament* hath been wilfully corrupted, by wicked and designing men; either by erasing particular passages out of it, or interpolating others into it. As to the *Pentateuch*, or book of the law, he tells us, p. 138. *that it must, in a particular manner, have been liable to great alterations, and to such as hinder us from discerning now, what truly belongs to Moses, from that which hath been added by those who succeeded him.* And for this assertion he assigns two reasons; the one a reason that seems to destroy itself; and the other, if not a falsehood, yet what he will never be able to prove. The first is, that the books of the law were much neglected by the *Jews*, because very much prone to idolatry. But may we not argue, that if the law was very much neglected by the idolatrous *Jews*, it must have been, by parity of reason, as much valued by those of them, who worshipped the Lord God of *Israel* only; and that therefore they would be particularly careful to preserve those sacred

cred books, which contained the whole ritual of divine worship, free from all remarkable alterations and corruptions? Besides, the neglecting these books can never be the reason of their being corrupted, as to those that actually corrupted them. They knew their contents too well; and therefore if any designing idolatrous priests took occasion, from the general neglect, to corrupt the *Pentateuch*, it must have been with a design to render it favourable to the cause of idolatry, to which the *Jews* were so strongly inclined. And if our author can, in one instance, prove, that the *Pentateuch*, as it now stands, hath any such tendency, I'll give him up the entire controversy.

As to the other reason he mentions, *that the Jews were reduced, for a considerable time, to one copy, which was also lost so long, that the contents of it were become unknown;* this I take to be an assertion without any foundation to support it. The place he cites, *2 Kings xxii.* proves nothing like it; but only that as they were repairing the temple, *Hilkiah*, the high priest, found that copy of the book of the law, which

which had been reposed (see *2 Chron.* xxxiv. 14.) by *Moses's* command (see *Deut.* xxxi. 26.) in the side of the ark of the covenant. It seems probable indeed that *Josiah*, beginning his reign very young, when he was but eight years old, had not, at this time, read over the book of the law; but hearing that the original copy, which was deposited in the temple, was found, commanded it to be read; and when he understood how dreadful the threatenings of God were, towards the *Jews*, if they turned aside to idolatry, was exceedingly surprized, and willing to avert the threatned judgment from himself and people. But that they had the law in use before this, is evident from that reformation that was made throughout the whole kingdom, by the means of the king and high priest, before this accident; which could not have been brought to any perfection, or settled on any good foundation, without the law of the Lord to direct them: Besides that 'tis expressly said of *Josiah's* goodness, that it was *according to that which was written in the law of the Lord*, *2 Chron.* xxxv. 26. And indeed
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the whole history of the Jews, in the *Old Testament* writings, is a proof that the law was never lost, tho' under the reign of idolatrous kings, it was, by some, very much neglected. Thus *David* prays for *Solomon*, *Only the Lord give thee wisdom — — — that thou mayst keep the law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfill the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with*, 1 Chron. xxii. 12, 13. or as 'tis elsewhere expressed, *and keep the charge of the Lord thy God — — — as it is written in the law of Moses*, 1 Kings ii. 3. In the reign of *Aса*, 'tis expressly said, *that the priests taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them*, 2 Chron. xvii. 9. In the reigns of *Joash* and *Ama-ziah*, we also find that *Moses's* law was in being, 2 Chron. xxiii. 18. xxiv. 6. and xxv. 4. Under *Hezekiah* also, the grandfather of *Josiah*, 'tis said, *that the priests stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses, the man of God*, 2 Chron. xxx. 16. And again, *that he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept*

kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And again, that he appointed the kings portion of his substance, for the burnt offerings, viz. for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord, viz. Numb. xxviii. And the reason assigned for the captivity of the Israelites by the king of Assyria, in the fourth year of Hezekiah king of Judah, is, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, 2 Kings xviii. 6, 12. Isaiah also, who prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, speaks of the law, not only as a thing in being, but to which the people might have constant recourse. *To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to THIS WORD,* it is because there is no light in them, Iai. viii. 20. and other places that might be mentioned. So that the loosing of the law is a fiction of our author's, and therefore cannot be urged as a reason of its

its corruption. Besides, as it was the business of the prophets to preserve the worship of God amongst the *Jews*, as *Moses's* law directed, there is a abundant reason to believe they kept this book uncorrupt and entire.

And as to any alterations made either in these, or any other books of the *Old Testament*, by *Ezdras*, to me there seems but little reason for such a supposition. That he might collect the several dispersed writings of the prophets, collate the several manuscripts of them then extant, purge them from any errors that might have crept into them, thro' the negligence of transcribers, and so fix the text and true reading, for the use of future ages, seems probable enough: A work he was every way fit for, whether we consider him as a ready scribe in the law of *Moses*, Efr. vii. 6. or as a prophet under the inspiration and direction of the spirit of God. But that he altered the sacred books, from what they were before, seems a little incredible, because 'twill be hard to assign any probable reason that could induce him to do it. That
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the *Pentateuch*, or the books of the law, were the same as they were before, seems probable enough from many places. Thus *Joshua*, and others, built the altar of God, *as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God*, Ezra iii. 2. and fixed the bases of the altar, and offered the daily sacrifices, and kept the feasts of tabernacles and new moons, *as it is written, and according to custom*, ver. 3, 4, 5. And in *Nehemiah, chap. viii. 4.* 'tis said, that *the people ordered Ezra, the scribe, to bring this book of the law, which the Lord had commanded to Israel, which Ezra brought, and publickly opened, and read out of it, in the sight and hearing of all the people.* There was not the least suspicion of a corrupted, altered, mangled book in the people. They called for that ancient law which God delivered to *Moses*, and had it read to them: And undoubtedly there were some amongst that numerous assembly, that would have known and discovered the matter, had *Ezra* made any considerable alterations in it. And we also read farther, that when the foundations of

of the temple were laid, *the priests were set in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph with Cymbals, to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel.* Now this order we have no where recorded, but in the book of *Chronicles*, where we have a particular account of this matter, and 'tis therefore probable they had this book to have recourse to.

And as for the books of the prophets, in which are the most express predictions of future times, there is much less reason still to suspect them of being altered by *Ezra*. For as these prophecies were delivered publickly, so they were committed to writing, by God's express command, by the prophets themselves, in order that they might be preserved; according to that direction of God to *Isaiah*, xxx. 8. *Go write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever.* See also *chap. viii. 1.* Thus also did *Jeremiah* by God's order. See *chap. xxv. 13.* and *xxxvi. 1, Ec. 27, 28.* *Ezekiel xlivi. 11.* *Habbakkuk ii. 2.* And undoubtedly this was practiced by

them all, that their prophecies might be of more general and lasting use amongst the people. Now the prophets, at least all but a very few, lived either but a little before the captivity, or during the time of it, or after it. *Isaiah*, whose prophecies of the *Messiah* are most frequent and express, lived under the reigns of *Hezekiah* and *Manasseh*, which was about fifty years before the captivity. *Jeremiah* succeeded him in the prophetick office, and prophesied from the reign of *Josiah*, which was but two years after the death of *Manasseh*, throughout the days of *Jehoiakin*, to the end of *Zedekiah's* government, and the carrying away *Jerusalem* captive; and even during many years of the captivity itself. *Ezekiel* prophesied from the middle of the captivity and onwards. *Daniel* under *Nebuchadnezar*, *Belshazzar* his son, *Darius* his successor, until the days of *Cyrus*, under whom commenced the restoration of the *Jews*, from their long captivity. After their return prophesied *Haggai*, *Zechariah* and *Malachy*, encouraging them to rebuild their city and temple; and with, and

and after them, probably *Ezra*, and some few others, to settle them in their lands, to model their government, and to establish the worship of God amongst them, according to the law of *Moses*, and the direction of former prophets. Now it is not probable, that in such a small number of years, as intervened between *Isaiah*, and the time of the last prophets, the writings of *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*, and the rest, should be entirely lost; and the less so, because in their writings there were the most express promises, to the faithful *Jews*, of their restoration from their wretched captivity, and of glorious times to succeed, when they should be brought back to their own land and country. These prophecies must have been the great comfort and support of the pious *Jews*, during the continuance of their captivity; and I doubt not but that they read them themselves, and rehearsed them to their children, to inspire them with hopes of a glorious return to their long forsaken and desolate country. Or if the generality of the *Jews* disregarded these prophecies,

in which they were so much concerned; yet 'tis reasonable to think, that the succeeding prophets took special care to preserve them from being lost, or, in any considerable instances, altered or corrupted. So that there is no ground to think that *Esra*, either could, or would alter any of the writings of the *Old Testament*. For as he had not any opportunity to do it, so neither can I imagine there could be any probable reason to induce him to it. Possibly he reviewed them, mended the faults of copies already taken, ordered more to be transcribed, for the use and benefit of the people; divided them into sections, and ordered the stated regular reading of them on the sabbath day; that the people being continually instructed in the law of God, might be more effectually restrained from idolatry and vice.

As for that other reason our author mentions, p. 139. 'tis a thing that carries such a face of prodigious improbability, that I cannot think he would have urged it, had he not, at all hazards, resolved to reproach *christianity*,

anity, even when he suspected the strength of his own arguments to disprove the truth of it. His argument in short is this, *That the Jews were departed from the unity of one God, and went idolaters into Chaldea : That the Chaldeans worshipped one God, and instructed the jewish youths of quality in this doctrine ; and that because the Chaldean kings ordained such a belief and worship amongst them, the Jews changed their own notions for those of their masters, and corrupted their own writings to make them agree with those of the Chaldeans, as to worship, history, and antiquity.* These are assertions that he hath not one testimony or reason to support, and which contradict the entire design, both of the *jewish* religion and writings ; which every where suppose, and inculcate the doctrine of one God ; a doctrine as ancient as the first founder of the *jewish* nation, and from which the best and wisest of the Jews never departed, even during the time of the grossest idolatry : A doctrine inculcated by all the prophets, thro' the successive reigns of their

several kings, and because of their departure from which they were carried captive into *Chaldea*, where they learned, not the unity of God, but, from their sufferings, the necessity of worshipping Him, and Him only. The review of the great calamities they had brought upon themselves and country, by their idolatrous apostacy from God, was that which gave that thorough turn to their minds, and kept them from relapsing into their ancient superstitions; not their dwelling in *Chaldea*, where the unity of God was not so firmly believed, but that they worshipped idols, *Isaiah xlvi. 1. xvii. 13.* *Jer. l. 2.* *Dan. iii. 1, 2.* and even their very kings, *Dan. vi. 7.* who were so far from ordaining the belief and worship of one God only, as that they inflicted the severest punishment on those, who would not comply with their idolatrous decrees. Instances of which we have in *Daniel*, and the *Three Children*.

I am glad to find however, that our author acknowledges, *p. 140.* That the books of the *Chaldeans* give a relation of matters, from the creation to the time

time of *Abraham*, very little different from that contained in the *Pentateuch*; which is to me little less than a demonstration of the antiquity, authority, and purity of those books, but no proof at all that one of those accounts was borrowed from the other. Criticks generally allow, that when ancient copies agree, 'tis a very good sign of the purity and genuineness of any book: And 'tis also of the genuineness and truth of an historical account, when the most ancient records of different nations give exactly the same. 'Tis thus with respect to the *Chaldeans* and *Jews*, both originally of the same country and family. *Abraham*, undoubtedly, delivered down to his posterity a genealogical account of those, from whom he descended. But 'tis ridiculous to suppose, that *Abraham* was the only man in all *Chaldea*, who kept such an account; 'tis rational rather to think, that he took a copy from the original record, which he left behind him; and therefore if this original account, or any faithful extract from it, was preserved amongst the *Chaldeans*, 'tis impossible but that

the *jewish* and *chaldean* history to *Abraham* must agree ; and their agreement may be looked on as a very strong argument of their being authentick and genuine. So that there is no need of supposing, as our author doth, p. 140. either that the conquerors must receive their history from the slaves, or the slaves from the conquerors, because the histories of both the nations were originally the same, and therefore, as far as they were both true, must both necessarily agree ; tho' one can scarce imagine, supposing the *chaldean* or *jewish* history to have been altered, that the *Jews* should alter theirs in compliance to the *Chaldeans*, who had burnt their city, destroyed their temple, made their country desolate, and detained their nation in a long captivity. These calamities made them entertain resentments too deep, ever to comply with their cruel masters in any thing, but what they were absolutely constrained to ; much less would they consent to corrupt and alter those writings, which they held sacred, and delivered to their nation by God himself. And thus our author, hath,

hath, contrary to his own design, rendered it probable, that the *Pentateuch* was a genuine and uncorrupted book at the time of the captivity.

And after the reading of the law and prophets in the *synagogues*, which began soon after the *Jews* return out of *Chaldea* into their own land, grew into use and constant custom, the alteration and corruption of sacred writings became still more impracticable. For the *Jews*, who had the highest veneration for them, and were constant auditors, would soon have perceived it had there been any material passages left out, or any other considerable ones inserted, and would never have submitted to such known and wilful corruptions of them. Besides as the *Synagogues* grew numerous, so also did the copies of the *law*, and consequently the difficulty of corrupting them was the greater. And tho' our author thinks that numerous changes were introduced into the *Old Testament* writings by the *Majoretes*, I think the contrary seems rather probable; because of the superstitious care they took

took about the sacred books ; numbering not only the verses, but the words, letters, consonants, and points, and marking the various readings, and every thing that was peculiar either in the words or sense. Had these criticks lived after *Christ*, they would have had some temptation to have corrupted their books, that they might not have appear'd too plain in favour of *Christianity*; but as they wrote long before this, and so could have no inducement to alter them, 'tis reasonable to think, that their scrupulous care about the sacred books was the effect of the deepest veneration for them, and a desire to preserve them free from the least corruption. Since therefore it appears probable, that there was no considerable alterations happened to the books of the *Old Testament* before *Christ*, and our author himself will not allow Mr. *Whiston* that they were corrupted after, in order that he may fix on the *Apostles* the charge of citing and applying them allegorically and impertinently, I think I may reasonably conclude, That the many prophecies contain'd in them, relating

lating to the *Messiah*, having so exact an agreement with the character of our blessed Lord, and being literally accomplished in him, do sufficiently prove all that they are ever cited to prove, viz. That he was the *Messiah* whom the *Jews*, expected, and therefore abundantly justifies us in acknowledging him as such, and in believing and obeying his Gospel.

Possibly some may think I have been two long on this head, and that our author ought to have assigned the reasons for his supposition, that the scriptures are corrupted, and tell us when and where, and by whom, and with what view this was done, before he deserves any reply. I confess that general charges and unsupported suppositions ought to have no weight or regard with any considerate persons. But as he seems to think that he hath given some *shrewd hints* upon this occasion, and speaks with the greatest assurance of the corruption of scripture as a thing certain and undeniable, I was willing to examine into this matter with the greater carefulness ; and I own that

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the more I think of it, I am the more fully convinced, that the books of the *Old Testament* are, as to the main and material parts, genuine and uncorrupted, tho' in lesser matters possibly some errors may have happened to them.



C H A P.



C H A P. X.

Concerning the particular prophecies applied by CHRIST to himself.



HE reader will observe, that the particular prophecies I have insisted on, in the foregoing chapter, as relating to the *Messiah* in the *Old Testament*, and applied to and verified in *Christ*, and in him only, are such as respect principally those great events of his sufferings, death, resurrection, and universal kingdom over *Jews* and *Gentiles*. That these things should some time or other come to pass, is foretold in the most plain and express manner; and they

they are spoken of as circumstances to distinguish, from all other, some one particular person and season. And of consequence when they all of them agree to, and are verified in any one particular person, and such a one declares himself to be *the very person* intended by such prophecies, those prophecies then become proper and certain proofs that he was the person spoken of, and are therefore justly urged and applied as such. I therefore add, and I think

'Tis an observation of some weight in this controversy, that the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, which *Christ* applies to himself, as proper and demonstrative proofs of his being the *Messiah*, are such only as relate to those great events of his sufferings, resurrection, and universal kingdom. 'Tis evident indeed that he doth upon other occasions make use of scripture passages; but we shall then find, that he cites them in a more lax and general manner, laying but little stress upon them, and not urging them as certain and convincing proofs of his being the *Messiah*, but with some
very

very different intention and view. Thus sometimes he quotes passages out of the *Old Testament* for the proof of some disputed or denied truth; as when he argued with the Sadducees for the truth of a future state, from those words of God, *Exod.* iii. 6. *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaack, and the God of Jacob.* Sometimes he quotes them as descriptive of, and applicable to the circumstances of his own time, and the temper of the people amongst whom he conversed; as when he applies to the Jews that passage in the book of *Esaias* 29. 13. *Ye hypocrites well did Esaias prophecy of you,* or how justly may I apply to you what *Esaias* prophesied, or declared of the Jews in his time, *This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, &c.* And in that other place *Mat.* 13, 14. *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear and not understand &c.* which is no more than to say, that that prophetick description of the Jews in *Esaias* time, was true of the Jews in our Saviour's time; and they are cited as a prophecy,

ey, not because those words predicted this particular event, but because they were originally delivered by a prophet, and were part of a message he had received by inspiration from God. Sometimes he quotes scripture, by way of similitude and illustration. Thus he tells the *Jews* that he would give them no sign but that of *Jonas* the prophet. *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights, in the heart of the earth.* No man of ingenuity can imagine that our Saviour urges the former event, as a proof of the latter; but that he only intends to teach us thus much, that the deliverance of the son of man from the grave should be as wonderful, as the deliverance of *Jonas* from the whale's belly; and as true a declaration of his being the *Messiah*, as the other event was of *Jonas*'s being a prophet, and under the special care and protection of Heaven. And thus, with the same view, he elsewhere declares, *That as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the*

the son of man be lifted up, John. iii.
 14. Sometime he makes use of the words of scripture to express his own sense and meaning; and we shall find that they were the most proper, that could be used on such occasions. Thus he orders *John's* disciples to carry back this message to their master, *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them;* or as the words, πλωχδι εναρξελιζονται, may be render'd *good tidings are preached to the meek.* Mat. xi. 5. plainly referring to these two prophecies *Isa.* xxxv. 6. and lxi. 1. And what could be a more proper answer than this, since at the same time he gave them the most substantial proof of his mission from God, and put them in mind of the predictions of their own prophets, who foretold that these things should come to pass, in the days of the *Messiah.* Upon these, and other such like occasions, our blessed Saviour oftentimes cites the *Old testament* writings, and every one that reads these quotations with any

care will find, that they are brought in as things meerly incidental, and by way rather of illustration, than argument or proof; at least that they are not urged as the only proofs of the truth of his pretensions to be a prophet from God, or the *Jews Messiah*. But when ever he properly appeals to the *Old Testament*, and applies any particular passages from thence to himself, to prove himself to be *the Christ*, we shall find they are such as relate to his sufferings, resurrection, pouring forth the spirit, and universal kingdom ; because these things were in the most plain and expres terms predicted of him, and because their being understood by the *Jews* was necessary to remove the prejudices they had conceived against him. And as to such passages we shall find they are cited in the strongest terms. Thus a little before our Saviour's last journey to *Jerusalem*, he began to shew his Disciples, ὅτι δέ ωτὸν παθεῖν, that it was necessary the son of man should suffer, and be killed, and be raised again the third day, Mat. xvi. 21. viz. in order to the

the accomplishment of the scripture prophecies; as he himself expressly told his disciples, after his resurrection, and but just before his ascension into heaven, *Luke xxiv. 44, 45, 46, 47.* And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the scripture. i. e. gave them the true explication of many of the ancient prophecies, relating to the *Messiah*; and in the conclusion added, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Christ to suffer; ἵνα ταῦτα τὸν χειρὸν, it was necessary that Christ should suffer, viz. because it was thus written that Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* Where it is to be observed that Christ appeals to some things, not as allegorically set forth, but as expressly

written in the *Old Testament*; that it was necessary these things should be fulfilled; and that these things were, that the son of man should suffer, and rise again from the dead, and that the gospel should be preached to all nations. And when he urges, not only the general sense, and import of the scriptures, but applies any particular passages, as foretelling what should happen to the *Messiah*, and which he now declares necessary to be fulfilled, they are such as have a manifest reference to the same things. See *Mat.* xxvi. 31. 54. *Mark* ix. 12. and xii. 10. *John* vii. 38. 13. 18. xv. 25. xvii. 12. which I think are all the places where our Saviour applies any of the *Old Testament* prophecies expressly to himself. So that as these things were literally predicted of the *Messiah*, they were literally accomplished in *Jesus Christ*, and were therefore justly applied by *Christ* to himself, and were solid proofs of his being the *Messiah*. The meanness of his outward condition, his being rejected by the rulers and teachers of the *Jews*, and condemned and crucified

ed as an imposture and seducer of the people, were the great objections to the belief of his being the *Messiah*; of whom it was prophesied, that he should be a victorious prince, and rule and reign for ever; which objections against him could be no otherwise removed, but by shewing from their own scriptures that these things were to happen to the *Messiah*.

And this also we shall find was the method the apostles took, when they preached in the *jewish* synagogues, and proved from scripture that *Jesus* was the *Christ*; what ever other passages they might, either in their Epistles to mixed churches, or in discourse with the *Jews*, who acknowledged their reference to the *Messiah*, apply to *Jesus*, yet those prophecies they laid the main strength on, were those that related to the death and resurrection of the *Messiah*, and the preaching of the gospel to the *Gentiles*. Nor shall we find one single instance to the contrary, in any one of their publick discourses, where they cite the *Old Testament*, at all, throughout the whole acts of the

Apostles. Thus Peter in his first sermon to the Jews speaks of the descent of the holy spirit, and the resurrection of Christ, as expressly predicted by the prophets; and speaking of his sufferings says, *Those things which God before had shewed, by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.* Acts ii. 16. &c. iii. 18. Thus also Paul went unto the Jewish synagogue at Jerusalem, and reasoned with them out of the scripture, *Opening and alledging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.* Acts xvii. 3. And in his defence before king Agrippa, a Jew by profession, he openly declares, *having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those, which the prophets and Moses did say should come:* That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles, *Acts xxvi. 22, 23.* What can be more evident to any impartial person, than that the apostle appeals to plain

plain literal predictions that the *Messiah*, should suffer and dye, and rise again from the dead, and bring salvation to the *Gentiles*, and that these were the great things he witnessed thro' the help of God to small and great. See also *Acts* x. 43. xiii. 27, 47. xv. 15. 16. and xxviii. 28. which are all the places cited in the *Acts* as proofs of *Jesus* being the *Messiah*, and which all refer to those grand subjects I have insisted on. How therefore our author will make out that positive assertion, which he lays down, p. 79, 80. I understand not, viz. *That the authors of the books of the New Testament always argue absolutely from the [allegorical] quotations they make out of the books of the Old Testament, and that Moses and the prophets are every where represented to be a just foundation for christianity.* That he means the allegorical sense of the quotations is evident from what he farther adds, *that the preachers of the gospel gave the secret spiritual sense of the scriptures.* Whereas nothing is more evident, than that the apostles never argue absolutely,

either from the allegorical or literal sense of prophecies, i. e. never put the truth of *christianity* upon this as its sole foundation ; but refer men to those undeniable facts that evince the truth of *christianity*, viz. the miracles, and doctrines, and resurrection of *Christ*, and the effusion of his spirit ; and then in order to remove the prejudices of the *Jews* against *Jesus Christ*, upon account of his sufferings, shew how exact an accomplishment these things were of those ancient prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, which, according to the letter, and most obvious sense, did presignify these great events. And thus far the argument is certainly conclusive. If *Jesus Christ*, by his doctrines and miracles, did prove himself a real prophet, or person sent from God, and if he applied those predictions of the *jewish* writings, relating to the *Messiah*, to himself, and if there was an exact correspondence between those prophecies, and the circumstances of his life and death, and entire character, it will follow that he was, not only a real prophet, but that particular prophet described by those prophecies ;

prophecies ; and as the proper and conclusive proofs of his mission from God will be the excellency of his doctrines, and the extraordinary nature of his works, so the only arguments that could solidly prove him to be that particular prophet of the *Jews*, must be fetched from the agreement of those prophetick descriptions to him, and their accomplishment in him. Thus far the *New Testament* writers argue absolutely from the law and prophets, *i. e.* they do argue from the descriptions of the *Messiah*, in the *Old Testament*, and their accomplishment in *Jesus*, that he was the *Messiah*; because as this was the only proof that could be urged in the case, so it was a substantial and conclusive one ; because the argument is founded on *literal express predictions*, and as express and literal an accomplishment ; and not upon any *secret spiritual meaning and sense of prophecies*, as our author so often and so falsely insinuates. And therefore his interpreting that passage of St. *Paul*, *1 Cor. i. and ii. chap.* in support of his own scheme, *p. 92, 93.* argues him very ignorant

norant of St. Paul's meaning, (which I hope is the case) or wilfully to have misrepresented him. 'Tis allowed that he doth argue against the *Greeks* and philosophers. But what is the subject of his argument? What, that weak and inconclusive proofs ought to be made use of to support *christianity*? Or that the prophecies, cited by Jesus and his apostles, have no other reference to him, or the *Messiah*, but in an *allegorical, mystical sense*? There is not one single word, to this purpose, in either of the two chapters. St. Paul's meaning is evidently this, that he did not insist upon philosophical speculations, or study, as the custom then was, to recommend himself and doctrines by eloquence or oratory; but preached in a very plain manner, that plain doctrine of salvation by a crucified Saviour, that so the success of *christianity* might appear to be from God, and not owing to the art and subtlety of men. And tho' this doctrine was a *stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks*, who were either slaves to vice, or under the influence of

of strong prejudice and pride, yet to those that were *perfect*, *τελεῖοι* is the thoroughly initiated, persons who thoroughly understood the excellent nature and tendency of *christianity*, to such it was *wisdom*; to them it appeared a dispensation worthy of an all-wise God. It was indeed *wisdom in mystery*, i. e. this wise and glorious method of bringing men to happiness, tho' intended of God from before the foundation of the world, was yet long kept a secret from them, and not understood by those that *crucified the Lord of glory*: For had they known it, they would not have crucified him; whereas God was pleased, in his abundant goodness, to reveal it to the apostles by his spirit, without which it could never have been understood. *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God.* i. e. A man, by the meer use of his natural reason, without a divine and supernatural revelation, would never have thought of this method of salvation; yea, on the contrary, it would have appeared a very unlikely and improper method to save men, had not God, by his

his spirit, been pleased to assure us, that this was the way he had fixed on. This was a matter to be only *spiritually discerned*, i. e. that could never have been known without revelation, and the special illumination of the spirit, *who searches the deep things of God*, i. e. understands his secret counsels, and is able to reveal them to us. But *he that is spiritual judgeth all things*; i. e. He that hath a revelation from the spirit, is a proper judge in these matters, *tho' he himself is judged of no man*, viz. that is not under the influence of the same spirit of God. This is the plain meaning of St. Paul in this passage, who never thought of opposing the man, who judges by the *common rules of wisdom or philosophy*, to him who *finds out secret, mystical meanings of things*, by *special rules imparted to him of God*; but speaks of doctrines discovered by revelation, which could never have been known without it. So that the allegorical way of reasoning was so far from being set up by *Paul*, and the rest of the apostles, *as the true and only reasoning proper to bring all men*

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to the faith of Christ, p. 94. that they never laid any stress on allegories, nor argue the truth of any one single doctrine, or fact from them; nor endeavour *to beat the Gentiles out of the literal way of arguing*, i. e. of believing *christianity* upon solid foundations; but recommended the miracles, doctrines, and resurrection of *Jesus*, as the proper evidence of his divine mission; with this difference only to the *Jews*, that they shewed from the plainest predictions of their own prophets, that these things, which were great objections to them, against their believing in him, ought to have been so. And tho' the apostle doth tell us, *that not many wise men were called*, yet that he doth not mean persons who reasoned justly and pertinently, he himself tells us, when he calls them *wise men after the flesh*, i. e. persons under the power of vicious habits, or under the prepossession of strong and incurable prejudices; who opposed the doctrines of *christianity*, either because not favourable to their crimes, or contrary to those mistaken principles they had imbibed;

bibed ; not because they used *maxims of reasoning*, p. 94. and disputing *wholly opposite to*, i. e. in our author's sense, more just, and proper, and pertinent than the *christians*, who needed not arguments, from allegories, to support *christianity*, when they might have argued the truth of it from facts, which all its adversaries hitherto have never been able to disprove.

However, tho' nothing is more evident, from what hath been already said, than that the apostles laid their principal stress on this, That the sufferings and resurrection of *Christ*, and the preaching the gospel to the *Gentiles*, were conformable to the ancient prophecies relating to the *Messiah*, and therefore that our Lord's sufferings were no real objection against the truth of his pretensions, nor his resurrection a thing incredible, nor the preaching the gospel to the *Gentiles* a thing criminal, but even necessary to fulfill the sayings of the prophets ; yet 'tis certain that they cited other passages of scripture, besides such as relate to those great events, and applied them to *Jesus Christ* : And the question

question here is, Whether some of these passages have a real original reference to the *Messiah*; and if not, how 'tis consistent with the apostles characters, as inspired persons, to make such a false application of them to him? I answer, that of the several quotations mentioned by our author, some of them have a certain reference to the *Messiah*, and were literally accomplished in *Christ*; and no other but him. This I have already shewn of *Isaiah* vii. 14. applied by *Matthew* i. 23. the same is true of *Micah* v. 2. applied not by *Matthew*, as our author, thro' mistake, asserts, but by the chief priests and scribes of the people, to the *Messiah*, *Mat.* ii. 4. of *Isaiah* xl. 3. applied *Mat.* iii. 3. with others that might be mentioned. The application of such texts as these, which have a manifest reference to the *Messiah*, to *Jesus Christ*, is with the greatest reason and justice, and therefore can be no exception against the character of the apostles, as persons inspired of the *Holy Ghost*.

And as for other places, whose reference to the *Messiah* is not so plain, I think

think 'tis sufficient to obviate every objection that can be brought against the apostles for applying them to *Jesus* to consider, that it doth not appear that they always cite such places, as real predictions of events to happen in the *Messiah's* time, nor apply them to *Jesus*, as the proofs of his being the *Messiah*; but make use of the *Old Testament* scriptures, in their writings and controversies, with such views and such purposes, as was most suitable to the circumstances of the persons to whom they wrote. The first persons who had the gospel preached to them were *Jews*, and the several churches the *Apostles* at first gathered were either mostly of that nation, or else a mixture of *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The *Apostles* also of our blessed Saviour were all of them *Jews*, who boasted of their sacred writings, as the great privilege and glory of their nation, and who had beeen bred up with the highest esteem and veneration for them. And therefore 'tis no wonder that *Jews* writing to *Jews* should make frequent use of those scriptures, allowed, on each side,

side, to be of divine original, and introduce them on every occasion, to adorn, illustrate, and confirm their arguments: And tho' we, at this distance of time, may not be able to fix any rules, by which to distinguish when they quoted them for one or the other purpose, yet undoubtedly those to whom they wrote, who knew the method of writing at that time, understood the reason and propriety of the quotations they made; and there is no reason to think, that the apostles would ever have gone to have exposed themselves, and the cause they espoused, by an unnatural and unusual application, or explication of any passages out of the *Old Testament*. The prejudices of the Jews against our Saviour, and his religion, were already strong enough, and needed not to be heightened by a method of quoting scripture, that would have been generally thought a perverting and abusing it.



C H A P XI.

The particular places excepted against by the Author of the Grounds, &c. accounted for.



UT possibly it may not be so very difficult a matter to account for all, at least most of those citations that are excepted against, and to give some probable reasons why the writers of the *New Testament* made such use of them. And here 'tis evident that they quote some passages of the *Old Testament*, by way of illustration and simile, and to represent their own sense and meaning by instances, familiar to, and well understood

stood by those to whom they wrote. Thus St. Paul to the *Galatians*, iv. 21. &c. which our author also mentions with an air of contempt and scorn, p. 11. (tho' he falsely represents it, as designed to be a proof to the Jews of *christianity* from the *Old Testament*) illustrates the different states of men under the *mosaick* and *christian* dispensations, by the different states of the children born to *Abraham* by the bond-woman, and *Sarah* his wife. *Tell me ye that desire to be under the law.* i. e. You that press the observance of *jewish* rites and ceremonies on *christians*, as necessary to salvation, *Do ye not hear the law?* Shall I put you in mind of a passage in the law, that fitly represents your case? *Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman.* But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh, but he of the free-woman was by promise. And that it might appear what use he intended to make of this passage, he adds, *Which things are an allegory.* Ἀτιναὶ οὖσιν ἀλληγορεύμενα. Which things may be allegorized, or made use

of, as a figurative representation of the different states of *jews* and *christians*. *For these are the two covenants.* Αὗται γὰς εἰσὶν αἱ δύο διαθήκαι. These two women denote, in the allegory, the two covenants: Or I may fitly compare the two different dispensations, under *Moses* and *Christ*, to the different states and circumstances of these two women. *Mία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ.* The one covenant, which was delivered from the mount *Sinai*, gendereth to bondage. "Ητις εἰσὶν Ἄγρας. Which is *Agar*, or which covenant is *Agar* the bond-woman in the allegory, who being a bond-woman herself, could, *quia partus sequitur ventrem*, bring forth none but children subject to bondage. And this covenant from *Sinai* is more properly denoted by her. τὸ γὰρ Ἄγρας Σινᾶ ὄρος εἰσὶν ἐπὶ τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ. Because *Agar* is the name of a mountain also, even part of the tract of hills in *Arabia*, called by the general name of *Sinai*, from whence this very covenant was delivered. Συστιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ. And answereth, (viz. διαθήκη the covenant, not the woman, nor *Agar* the mountain) to the present *Jerusalem*. Δελδεῖ δὲ.

μετα τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς. Which city is *in bondage* asith its *children* or inhabitants. Ἡ δὲ ἄρω, Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐλαθέρα ἔσιν. But the other covenant * from above is the free *Jerusalem*; not as in our translation, the *Jerusalem*, which is above, is free: For the apostle plainly opposes the covenant from *Sinai*, to that from above; and as the covenant from *Sinai* doth συστοχᾶν τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ answer to the present *Jerusalem*; so the other, which is the θιατῆριν ἄρω must answer to, or be the free *Jerusalem*; and as the ἡ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ the present *Jerusalem* is in bondage with her children, so the free *Jerusalem* is the mother of all *christians*, as the apostle tells us, v. 26. who are *the children of the promise*, as *Sarah's child* was, and *not of the flesh*, as *Agar's* was; and of consequence in a state, not of servitude, but perfect freedom; as the apostle himself tells us, v. 31. *So then, brethren, fellow christians, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.*

* The apostle elsewhere uses ἄρω in this sense without the preposition. See *Phil. iii. 14.* where the ποβελεῖον τὸ ἄρω κλήσεως is the prize of our call from above, or of our heavenly calling. See *Coloff. iii. 1, 2.*

'Tis plain from hence, to every one that considers this passage, that there are two things the apostle had in view in it. The one to represent the different nature of the two covenants, that God made, first with the *Jews* by *Moses*, and afterwards with *christians* by *Jesus Christ*. The one, which was delivered from mount *Sinai*, denoted by *Agar* the bond-woman, was *a covenant that gendered to bondage*, i. e. brought the *Jews* under an heavy yoak of burdensome rites and ceremonies; under which yoak and burthen *Jerusalem*, with its inhabitants, the apostle tells them, continued to that day. The nature of the other covenant is as justly represented by the condition of *Sarah*, who was herself a *free-woman*, and who therefore may be looked upon as the mother of all true *christians*; who by the gospel are brought into a state of the most perfect liberty and freedom. The other thing that the apostle intended to represent by this allegory, was the different condition of *Jews* and *christians*, according as they were under these different dispensations; which he

he doth under the different circumstances of the two children, born of *Sarah* and *Agar*. *Isaac* was born, not properly *after the flesh* (*Abraham* and *Sarah* being both past age) but *after the promise*; in virtue of a special promise made of God to his parents, and became *Abraham's* heir, by God's appointment, preferable to *Ismael* his elder brother. And thus also *christians*, tho' not the children of *Abraham*, according to the flesh, yet as *Isaac* was, are *children of the promise*. For it is written, *rejoice thou barren that barest not, break forth and cry out thou that travellest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband*; and being thus *Abraham's* seed, are become his heirs according to the promise. The other son *Ismael*, was born *after the flesh*, i. e. when both *Abraham* and *Agar* were capable of having children; but notwithstanding this, was cast out with his mother the bond-woman, and not suffered to be heir with *Sarah's* son, because he persecuted him that was born after the spirit, i. e. *Isaac*, either born

to inherit his father's spiritual promises, or as I rather think, whose birth was owing to the immediate influence of the spirit. And thus the *Jews*, tho' Abraham's *children according to the flesh*, yet, for persecuting the Lord *Jesus Christ*, the true promised seed of *Abraham*, and born after the spirit, were to be rejected from being God's peculiar people and inheritance, even as *Ismael* was from being heir to the house of *Abraham* his Father. This is the plain sense and view of this whole passage. And what is there so very ridiculous in this way of talking? What unbecoming the character of a wise man, or an inspired apostle? Every writer hath the liberty of illustrating his own sense by what representation and similes he pleases. And in the case before us nothing could be more proper than that which the apostle uses, considering he is speaking, either to bigotted *Jews*, or to those, who were so far leavened with *jewish* principles, as to be for bringing *christians* under bondage to *jewish* rites and ceremonies. How could the apostles better represent two covenants,

nant, each having their respective subjects under it, than by the simile of a mother and her children? How could he better illustrate this to *Jews*, than by putting them in mind of *Sarah* and *Agar*, the two wives of *Abraham* their father? How could he better prove that persons, not *Abraham's* children according to the flesh, yet might become his children, and inherit by virtue of a promise; and that *Abraham's* children, according to the flesh, might be rejected from the inheritance and blessing, than by proving it was so originally, with respect to *Abraham's* own children, by *Sarah* and *Hagar* his wives. So that as this allegory partly illustrates, and partly proves, all that it was designed to illustrate or prove, it is, with a great deal of elegance made use of in this place by the apostle; who never designed it as an argument to prove *christianity*, but only as an illustration of the different natures of *christianity* and *judaism*; and to shew them from their own scriptures, that not all that are born of *Abraham* according to the flesh, but

but those only that are born according to the spirit, are *Abraham's* proper children, and heirs of the promises.

I hope our author did not wilfully misrepresent this plain passage : And I choose, even against appearance, to perswade my self to think, (I wish, for his sake, I may guess right) that 'twas the effect of hasty prejudice ; and beg him for the future to be sure of the absurdity in St. Paul's writings, before he gives himself the liberty of ridiculing them.

Sometimes the writers of the *New Testament* quote the scriptures of the *Old*, to shew a correspondence of events between the *Old Testament* and the *New*; or represent such particular events as properly described by such particular expressions, because they nearly resemble the events these expressions were originally descriptive of. Thus *out of Ægypt have I called my son*, is not appealed to as a proof, that Christ was to go into *Ægypt*, and then to return out of it; but only as an observation of the agreement of circumstances between the infant state of the *hebrewe* commonwealth,

wealth, and that of the child *Jesus* the son of God, the king of *Israel*; both being carried into *Egypt* by a special providence, for their preservation, and by as special a providence called out of it ; and because the bringing of God's only son out of *Egypt*, was an event as truely worthy of notice, as the bringing the children of *Israel* from thence into the land of promise : And his coming from thence was a fulfilling of that which was spoken by the Lord, or it was agreeable to the true sense of those words, and in a peculiar manner made them good. And this is a thing familiar with the *New Testament* writers, to represent events happening in their own time, by passages of scripture denoting former events like them. Thus the same evangelist in another place, *Mat.* ii. 18. tells us was fulfilled, that which was spoken by *Jeremy* the prophet, xxxi. 15. Or his words, upon an occasion of great distress, might be more especially applied to the greater distress of the weeping bereaved Mothers, upon the slaughter of their children by cruel *Herod*. *In Ramah* *was there*

there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning ; Rachel, weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not. And here 'tis worthy of our observation, that this very passage of *Jeremiah* is plainly an allusion to *Rachel's* grief because she had no children. *Give me children or I die*, said *Rachel* to her husband. *Gen. xxx. 1.* *Rachel's* grief was exceeding bitter because she had no children ; and the mother's grief, prophetically described by *Jeremiah*, was to be as bitter, because bereft of the children they had. And therefore if it was proper in *Jeremiah*, to point out the grief he prophesied of by *Rachel*, it was as proper in *Matthew* to apply the same instance to describe an occasion of greater distress in his own time. In the same sense, were fulfilled those words of *Isaiah vi. 9.* which St. *Paul* applies to the *Jews*, who believed not, *Acts xxviii. 26, 27.* *Go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive, &c.* And in another place, and at a different time, tho' for the same reason. *Rom. xi. 8.* and with another

another form of quotation. *According as is written, God hath given them eyes that they should not see.* And 'tis farther to be observed that these very words are the same, which our Saviour applies to the *Jews*, upon another occasion. *Mat. xiii. 14.* and from their being thus quoted by *Christ* and *St. Paul* at different times, tho' applied to persons in like circumstances, we may reasonably infer to our present purpose, that 'twas very usual to apply the passages of the *Old Testament*, to describe any particular events, which were correspondent to those, that were originally denoted by such passages. This passage of *Isaiah* was certainly a description of the bad temper of the *Jews*, in his time; but yet because the *Jews*, to whom our Saviour preached, and those afterwards to whom *St. Paul* preached, were of the like perverse and wicked disposition, this passage was justly applied to them both; and none, but persons of our authors great intelligence, would have been in danger of looking upon such quotations as designed to be allegorical and mystical proofs. I add that

that St. *Paul*'s method of quoting this passage leads us to the true meaning of the different form our Saviour makes use of. *Christ* introduces it with, *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias*, i. e. what the words of that prophecy described there, they do as truly describe now. They may be as justly applied to the *Jews* of this time, as they were to the *Jews* then. For to this purpose they are evidently quoted by St. *Paul*, who thus introduces them, *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our Fathers.* In which words he owns the prophecy was originally meant of their fathers, tho' at the same time, because of the great agreement of circumstances, he applies them to their obstinate and unbelieving children. And lastly, the different manner, in which *Mark* brings in our Saviour as quoting this passage, sufficiently explains the meaning of the form of quotation our Saviour used, according to *Matthew*. In *Mark* iv. 11, 12. our Lord, in a continual discourse, brings in the words of this prophecy, without any form of quotation at all; from which it appears, that

that he cited them only to express his own sense of the *Jews* perverse temper, that the impression made on them might be greater, by putting them in mind, that it was the temper of their fathers as described by the prophet. A method often used by the preceeding prophets. See *Isa.* lxv. 7. *Jerem.* xvi. 11. *Ezek.* xx. 8, &c. And by our Saviour himself elsewhere. *Mat.* xxiii. 31. and *Stephen*, *Acts* vii. 51, 52. And if this appears to be the reason of our Saviours quoting this passage according to *Mark*, 'tis reasonable to think, that the form of quotation in *Matthew* means no more, since the passage quoted and the occasion were both the same.

Sometimes they quote the *Old Testament* scriptures by way of accommodation, and as emphatically expressive of their own sense and meaning. Of this there are many instances to be produced. See *Rom.* iii. 4, 10. &c. and in other places. And when they are cited for this purpose, sometimes the author from whence they are taken is not made any mention of. See *Rom.* x. 13. and xi. 34. But generally they are introduced

duced with an, *as it written, or thus saith Esaias, or the scripture.* i. e. to which purpose I may apply this or the other passage of the scripture; to shew that the words are cited, not as real and proper proofs, but as justly describing the writers sense, or fitly applicable to the argument he is treating of. And this method of citing scripture is very common with St. Paul, which I am inclined to think he rather did, that he might shew, that notwithstanding the scripture was grown so much into contempt amongst many of the Jews, they having learnt to esteem the tradition of the elders before them, yet that they were worthy the serious reading and consideration of all christians, as being *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.*

Sometimes they apply the general sense of the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, to particular events under the *New*: Or shew that these events are agreeable to the plain sense and meaning of those prophecies; and that therefore they are so far a proper accomplishment

plishment of them. Thus it was plain-foretold, that the *Messiah* should be *without form and comeliness*, and that he should be *despised and rejected of men*; that *men should hide their faces from him*; that he should be *despised and not esteemed*. And therefore all the reproachful names that were given him, and every circumstance that had a tendency to make him little and contemptible in the opinion of others, was a literal and proper accomplishment of such prophecies. And therefore with justice it might be said on every such occasion, *this or that happened that the scriptures might be fulfilled*; not as predicting that particular event, but as foretelling what that event verified *viz*, that his appearance should be mean, and his person contemptible. Thus *Jesus went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth*, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, not that he should dwell at *Nazareth*, as our author, p. 5. too hastily asserts, but *that he should be called a Nazarene*; i. e. counted a worthless insignificant fellow. *Galilee* was looked on to be the most contemptible place in all *Judea*, and *Nazareth*

the most despicable town in Galilee. And therefore to be called a *Nazarene*, is the same thing as to be accounted a mean and insignificant person, and one very unlikely to be a prophet. And that this is the true sense of *Nazareen*, appears from several instances. Thus when some said that *Jesus* was the *Christ*, others objected, *Shall Christ come out of Galilee?* John vii. 14. and thus the *Pharisees* answered *Nicodemus*, *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* John vii. 52. And *Nathaniel* said to *Philip*, declaring *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* John i. 46. And thus *St. Paul* tells *Agrippa*, *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name, that contemptible name, of Jesus of Nazareth.* Acts xxvi. 9. And thus the christians themselves were called by the reproachful name of *Nazareens*. Thus 'twas one part of *St. Paul's* accusation, that he was *a pestilent fellow, — and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarens.* Acts xxiv. 5. *Galilean* also was a name of like contempt and scorn. Thus some of them that stood by *Peter*, said, *Thou*

art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto; intimating that there was something very mean in his speech that betrayed his country. *Mark xiv. 17.* And the reason why the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* wondered to hear the apostles speaking all languages, was, because they were *Galileans*. *Acts ii. 7.* This was a name by which the primitive christians were called by their enemies in derision ; and *Julian* is said thus to have called our Saviour, in that known expression, *Vicisti Galilee*; which, if never spoken by *Julian*, yet clearly proves that *Galilean* was a name of reproach and contempt : And this surely the scriptures did plainly foretel, that *Christ* should be a contemptible person. So that we have no need of *Netzer* or *Tsemah*, or any such forced and far-fetch'd reconciliations to justify St. *Matthew* in this place, because the scriptures did plainly foretell what this name *Nazareen*, as fixed on *Christ*, did certainly accomplish. And the different method of citing this place, from what is else where made use of, is a circumstance to be here regarded. St. *Matthew* doth not cite this as a prediction

dition of any particular prophet, but introduces it with, *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken διὰ τῶν προφήτων by the prophets;* to shew that his being called a *Nazareen* did accomplish that, which the prophets did foretel should happen to the *Messiah*, viz, that he should be despised and rejected of men.

And in order to make this yet clearer, if there be any need, let it be considered, that prophecies of a general nature, or describing a general character, and such are all the prophecies that predict the mean and humble condition of the *Messiah*, can only be fulfilled by particular events, or a train and series of such particular events, as together make up such a character; whereas prophecies, describing one particular circumstance only, can be fulfilled no other way, but by such a circumstance happening to the person of whom 'tis predicted. Thus that prophecy of *Micah*, v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem of Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee he shall come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel,* could be no otherwise accomplished, but by that persons coming

ming forth from, or being born in *Bethlehem*, of whom the prophecy is intended. But now if it be prophesied of the same person, that he should be as one, *that hath no form or comeliness in him, that he should be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and that men should hide their faces from him, that he should be despised and lightly esteemed*, how is this prophecy to be accomplished? What by any one particular occurrence? No, but by such a series of events as was necessary to make up this character, or to shew that he was a person both afflicted and despised. And therefore every particular circumstance of his disgrace and sufferings, tho' not particularly foretold, was an accomplishment of the true sense and meaning of these general prophecies; and as upon every such occasion *these scriptures were fulfilled*, it was justly said, *That this or that was done that the scriptures might be fulfilled*; and more especially when the more remarkable circumstances happened, that tended to render him contemptible and afflicted. Thus when the *Pharisees charged*,

him with casting out devils by *Beelzebub*, *Mat.* xii. 24. when many of his countrymen and kindsfolk believed not in him, *Mat.* xiii. 57. when he was set at nought, and mocked of *Herod* and his men of war, *Luke* xxiii. 11. when *Barabbas* the thief and murtherer was preferred before him, *Luke* xxiii. 18. as these things accomplished the prophecies concerning him, so I think, that with the highest reason it might be said upon every one of these occasions, *It came to pass that the scriptures might be fulfilled.* And in this sense we find the very same form of quotation; elsewhere made use of by *Christ* himself, and the *Evangelist Matthew.* Thus upon our Lords being betrayed by *Judas*, and apprehended by the officers of the chief priests, and *Christ's* healing the ear of the high priest's servant, which *Peter* had cut off, and telling him, *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than ten legions of Angels,* he adds, *But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* I do not find that any one of these things were particularly foretold ; and yet

yet I apprehend that these several circumstances of disgrace and contempt did fulfil all those prophecies, that spake of the mean and afflicted state of the *Messiah*, *Mat xxvi. 54.* And thus the *Evangelist* in the verses after, adding another circumstance or two of our Lords apprehension, viz. his words to the multitude, *Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and with staves to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid not hold on me,* concludes, *But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, ver. 56.* not surely because they predicted all these particular events, but only the general character of a despised afflicted person, which these particular circumstances made good. And thus I think I have cleared the sense of this passage, and shewn that the prophets did predict, what the name *Nazareen*, as given to our Saviour, did import ; and that therefore St. *Matthew* justly says upon this occasion, *The scriptures were fulfilled.*

Under this head it may be also proper to vindicate the application of another prophecy made by *Christ* viz,

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that *Johns* coming into the world fulfilled that prophecy, which declared that *Elijah should come before the day of the Lord.* Our author p. 76. affirms that this prophecy is not literally, but mystically fulfilled. I on the contrary affirm, that in the proper sense of it, it is truly and not mystically fulfilled. And in order to shew this 'tis necessary to make but this one observation. *viz.* That sometimes the *Old Testament* writings call one person by the name of another, that lived before him, if in any remarkable circumstances he be found to resemble him. There are many instances of this. The *Messiah* himself, according to the sense of the best jewish interpreters, and the plain meaning of several places, is called by the name of *David.* Thus *Ezekiel*, speaking of the happy time, that God would bring to pass, introduces him as thus speaking, *I will make one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all.* And David my servant shall be king over them; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. *Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25.* i. e. Some prince shall come and build up *David's*

David's house, and restore the glory of his throne ; be called to the government in as extraordinary a manner, and be as triumphant and victorious, as *David* was. See also *Ezek.* xxxiv. 23. And therefore if there ever hath appeared such a person as this, the prophecy hath been certainly accomplished, tho' *David* himself hath never ascended the throne, in person, since his death. And as the *Messiah* himself was thus spoken of, under *David's* name, is it any thing strange that his forerunner should be described by the name of a prophet, with whose spirit and power he was to come. The *Jews* expecting *Elijah* to appear in person proves nothing, tho' 'tis plain some of them did not. The question is, whether that prophecy, *Mal.* iv. 5. may not, according to the genius and frequent use of the *jewish* language, mean one that was to be very like to *Elijah*. This I have shewn in one instance. Another is in *1 Chron.* vi. 49. where the high priest and his children, in *David's* time, are mentioned by the name of *Aaron* and his sons, because they succeeded them in their priestly office

office and dignity. See also 1 Kings xii. 16. Jer. xxx. 9. Hos. iii. 5. and other places that might be mentioned. And if this may likely be *Malachy's* meaning, that one, in many respects resembling *Elijah*, should be the *Messiah's* forerunner, the consequence then is, that this prophecy was properly accomplished in *John Baptist*.

Sometimes they cite passages of the *Old Testament*, as allowed, and certain principles, in order to argue from them the truth of *christian* doctrines, as their natural and necessary consequences. Of this we shall find many instances in St. Paul's epistles. Thus in his epistle to the *Romans*, chap. i. 17. he tells us, *That in the gospel the righteousness of God, or the divine method of accepting and pardoning men, is revealed to be ἐν πίστει εἰς πίστιν, by faith, in order to bring men to the faith, εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως, for the obedience of faith, i. e.* to bring men to believe the gospel; *as it is written, or agreeable to that avowed principle of the Old Testament, The just shall live, ἐν πίστει by faith.* And the argument of the apostle is very strong

strong and conclusive, That since God had declared, in the *Old Testament*, by his prophets, *that the just should live by faith*, the *Jews* ought the more readily to believe the gospel, because therein the same principle of mens justification *ex misericordia patris* by faith, is laid down *ex misericordia filii*, in order to bring men to the obedience of it. And thus in *chap. xi, xii, xiii.* we find him abounding in his quotations out of scriptures, and that with the greatest elegance and propriety. For as in these, and other places, he argues about *jewiſh* topicks, or matters peculiar to the *Jews*, it was necessary to consider the ſenſe of the *jewiſh* scriptures, in order to ſhew, that *christianity* was ſo far from contradicting them, that all its main principles were agreeable to them, and ſupported by the moſt express testimony from them.



C H A P. XII.

Of ARGUMENTS ad
Hominem.

UT If these particulars should not be thought sufficient to account for the citations out of the *Old Testament* in the *New*, there is yet another method of vindicating the apostles still remaining, *viz.* That they argued *ad hominem*, or from the allowed interpretation of scripture amongst the *Jews*, in order to convince them, upon their own principles, that *Christ* was the true *Messiah*. Our author hath spent a whole chapter, *chap. II.* to prove the contrary, but hath failed in the attempt. If indeed false assertions,

assertions, and malicious insinuations and comparisons would have done, he hath not been wanting in this part of the argument; but otherwise I may venture to affirm, that he hath not advanced one probable reason in support of his assertion. I have already proved, that the *Jews*, long before the time of *Christ*, were in expectation of the *Messiah*, i. e. of a certain prince and deliverer, whose coming, as they apprehended, was foretold by the writings of their prophets. Of consequence no arguments could be sufficient to convince them of *Christ's* being the *Messiah*, or that particular prince they expected, unless they saw the prophecies, which they apprehended had a relation to him, verified in the person who assumed that character; and therefore 'twas as necessary that the apostles should shew, that those passages, which had a real reference to the *Messiah*, were accomplished in *Jesus Christ*, as it was that they should prove him to be the *Messiah*: And as to others, where their reference to the *Messiah* was not so natural and clear, yet, if it had been the constant method of the

Jews,

Jews to apply them to the future times of the *Messiah*, nothing could be more proper in the apostles, when reasoning with the *Jews*, than to apply them to *Jesus Christ*, as far as they did agree to his person and character.

But is this agreeable to the character of inspired persons, to make use of arguments not conclusive, or to argue with others from what they know to be a false sense of scripture? I answer, that so many and strong were the prejudices that the *Jews* laboured under, as made their conversion to *christianity* exceeding difficult, and therefore rendered it the more necessary that they should be dealt with in a very tender manner. Particular truths were to be told them as they were able to bear, and their prejudices were to be gradually removed by a prudent forbearance. The apostles of our blessed Saviour could not but remember his conduct towards themselves, and acknowledge both the wisdom and goodness of it; and had therefore reason to believe, that the same method of acting towards others might have a good influence over them.

them. They did not indeed conceal the main and essential doctrines of *christianity*, how much soever those to whom they preached might be offended with them. But as for other matters of lesser importance, the interpretation of a single passage of scripture for instance, supposing them mistaken, was it necessary they should be immediately contradicted? Or rather, was it not prudent to leave it to time and better knowledge to correct it? Or ought the apostles to have neglected to shew them, how such and such a passage was accomplished in *Jesus Christ*, if they fairly could do it, and those, to whom they preached, expected it?

If these indeed were the only topicks they argued from, I should suspect their inspiration, and their testimony would deserve but little credit. But since there are but few instances of this kind, and the apostles lay but little stress upon such citations; and at the same time they make use of them, lay down other solid and substantial proofs of the truth of *christianity*, such as the certainty of *Christ's* miracles and resurrection, the excellency

excellency of his doctrines, and the certain accomplishments of real prophecies, as this was a rational method of converting them to the *christian* faith, so the other was but a prudent means of preventing the ill effects of their prejudices; and all that will follow from this way of arguing in the apostles is, not that they endeavoured to build *christianity* on a false foundation, but that as they established the truth of it by undeniable proofs, so they took all the best care they could to secure to them their proper influence and force. Indeed such a method of arguing as this is not to be looked upon as any proper proof, nor is it ever designed as such by those who make a just use of it. It is rather an appeal to a persons present sentiments, and taking the advantage of his own concessions. This, 'tis true, would be unworthy a wise or a good man, if there were no arguments of intrinsic worth made use of ; but where the thing to be proved is supported by solid reasons, I see nothing to forbid our appealing to a persons avowed sentiments, where a fair advantage can be made

of it ; especially, as by thus complying for a while with an innocent prejudice, we take the most effectual way hereafter to remove it. For he who uses this method of arguing with another, doth not hereby avow the truth of the principles he argues from ; and therefore cannot be said to confirm him in his prejudice or mistake ; tho' at the same time it must be allowed, he doth not endeavour to undeceive him. But is it necessary that, when we argue with any person to convince him of any particular truth, we must immediately also endeavour to undeceive him of every mistake ? Is it not the more rational and just way, first to establish him in the belief of the things that are of greater importance ; and when by the force of evidence he is gained thus far, lesser mistakes will be more easily removed, and truth of every sort will have the more free access to his understanding and belief. Supposing then that passage of *Hosea*, *Out of Ægypt have I called my son*, had not any original reference to the *Messiah*, but was only interpreted so to have by the *Jews* at that time ;

how were they to be treated under such a perswasion ? Had the apostles of *Jesus Christ* immedately denied the reference of this prophecy to the *Messiah*, the *Jews* possibly would have answered, the reason was, because there was nothing in his character to answer to it; and so would have continued unbelievers, under the pretence that scripture prophecies were not sufficiently accomplished in him. Was it not therefore expedient, that if there was any remarkable event in our Saviour's life, that did properly correspond with the sense of that passage, it should be pointed out to the *Jews*? Or was there any thing of untruth in saying, if that was a prophecy of the *Messiah*, then thus is the scripture fulfilled; or this event is the accomplishment of that prophecy ?

Indeed the very application of these passages to *Jesus Christ* by his apostles, is proof enough that the *Jews*, in the apostles time, understood them of the *Messiah*, as our author allows p. 81. where he tells us, *That the Pharisees, who made up the body of the Jews, as well as the Esseens, used the allegorical*

allegorical method in the time of Jesus and the apostles. i. e. did interpret many passages of the *Old Testament* of the *Messiah*, and the times of his coming. Besides, had this been the pure invention of the apostles, such a novel method of interpreting scripture would have been so far from being of service to their cause, that it must have exposed them to universal contempt; and prejudiced more against a religion, than put such a forced interpretation on the sacred writings, than all their pretended miracles could have prevailed with to embrace it. And it is reasonable to think, that the antient *Jews* would have attacked *christianity* with as great insolence, as our author, p. 83. tells us the modern ones do, if in so many instances the apostles had either given a new interpretation of scripture, or contrary to the received sense of scripture at that time. And if this was then the general method, I think no reason can be alledged, why the apostles might not sometimes comply with it.

What renders it probable that they did is, that St. *Matthew's* gospel, which con-

tains the most exceptionable passages, was written originally in *hebrew*, for the use of the *Jews*; and 'tis therefore reasonable to think, that as he understood the *Jews* sense of their own prophecies, being himself a *Jew*, so he would not neglect to shew how the principal events of *Jesus's* life corresponded with them. And tho' this way of arguing would have been very improper with any persons but *Jews*, *whose were the promises*, yet to them it was necessary, because there was no other way of convincing them, but this, that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*.

But what is more considerable is, that the apostles never once make use of this method of arguing, but with *jews* and *proselytes*, or persons leavened with *jewish* principles; nor to prove any thing else but that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*. Our author indeed, with his usual modesty, positively asserts the contrary; and tells us, That *particular apostles reasoned allegorically*. i. e. from the false sense of scripture in their sermons, *with greater success on Gentiles than on Jews*; as Paul did before Felix, when

when he said he took his heresy or christianity, from the law and the prophets, as well as before Agrippa; to which purpose he also cites other places, viz. *Acts* xiii. 15 — 48. x. 37 — 43. p. 80. Now every one of these instances are so far from proving his point, that they prove the direct contrary to what he produces them for. As to the first instance, St. Paul's defence before *Felix*, our author did not seem to have over much regard to truth, when he tells us, that *Paul* calls christianity his heresy; whereas he only says, *that after the manner which the Jews called heresy, so served he the God of his fathers*; nor when he says that *he took his christianity from the law and the prophets*, of which there is not the least intimation, and the contrary to which is true, he having received the gospel by immediate revelation from *Christ*. Indeed the whole of his defence, before *Festus*, is such, as makes it very evident, that his great design was to remove the prejudices the *Jews* his countrymen had conceived against him. In order to this he assures them, that he believed *all things which were written in the law and the prophets*,

phets, and that he taught nothing contrary to them, and that he was only called in question touching the resurrection of the dead. Such a declaration as this would have been very impertinent before a gentile auditory. But when the Jews were his accusers, and his charge was, That he was the *ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and a profaner of the temple;* the publick avowing his belief of all things written in the law and the prophets; and his entertaining the same hope with them of a resurrection from the dead, was the most proper vindication of himself from his *jewish* accusers, that could possibly be urged. But when he addresses himself more immediately to *Felix,* who knew nothing of the *jewish* scriptures, *be reasons of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come,* principles of natural religion: And 'twas this that awed the *Roman* governor, and made him tremble, *Acts xxiv.*
15 — 25.

Nor is our author more happy in the other instances he hath quoted: *Paul's reasoning from the scriptures, Acts xiii. xiv. &c.* was evidently designed for the

the conviction of the *Jews* and religious proselytes. For the text expressly tells us, that *on a sabbath day, and in a jewish synagogue, and at the desire of the rulers of the synagogues, he reasoned with the jewish congregation*; urging this grand argument to convince them of the truth of *Christ's* being the *Messiah*, that both his death and resurrection from the dead were agreeable to the scripture. At v. 43. 'tis expressly declared that the congregation, in a great measure, consisted of *Jews* and proselytes, *i. e.* proselytes of the gate, who, tho' they worshipped and feared the one true God, yet submitted not to the ceremonial part of the *jewish* religion. And 'tis therefore probable that, by the *Gentiles* mentioned v. 42. is meant, not idolatrous *Gentiles*, but these proselytes of the gate, to whom the *Jews* were as unwilling the gospel should be preached, as to the idolatrous *Gentiles* themselves. And therefore when *Paul* and *Barnabas* said, *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye, i. e. the Jews, put it from you, and judge your selves*

selves unworthy of everlasting life, we turn to the Gentiles, I doubt not but they mean these proselytes of the gate; who, being looked on by the Jews as *aliens from the common-wealth of Israel*, might well rejoice to have *the word of life* preached unto them. Or supposing that by *Gentiles* is meant idolatrous *Gentiles*, yet it is certain that *Paul* reasoned from the scripture for the conviction of his *jewish* hearers, v. 46. and that the *Gentiles* rejoiced to hear the doctrine of salvation preached to them, v. 47, 48.

In *Acts xxvi.* *Paul* reasons much after the same manner, when apologizing for himself before king *Agrippa*, who was himself of the *jewish* religion. He declares his miraculous conversion, and endeavours to prove from the scripture, v. 23, &c. that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light to the people, and to the Gentiles. *Festus* the Roman governour, who knew nothing of the *jewish* scripture, when he heard St. *Paul* talking of lights and brightnesses, and voices from heaven, of

of preaching to the *Gentiles*, and the resurrection from the dead, concludes him a visionary and enthusiast, and rashly pronounces him a madman. But the apostle clears himself of the charge by an immediate appeal to king *Agrippa*. *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely. King Agrippa believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest.* This examination of the apostle was at *Agrippa's* desire ; and there was no other method so proper to defend himself, or *christianity*, before this jewish prince, as by shewing that the things he [*Paul*] taught were agreeable to those scriptures, which they both equally professed to beleive.

And as for *Cornelius*, who is the last instance our author takes notice of, this is as little to the purpose as the rest. For *Cornelius* was a proselyte of the gate, *a just man, one that feared God, and of good report amongst all the nation of the Jews*; and there is no doubt but such persons had some
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veneration for the jewish scriptures, in which the true God was described. But this is not material. The great arguments *Peter* makes use of, were not derived from *scripture*, but *facts*: Such as the miracles of *Christ*, his death, and resurrection the third day, and the apostles being commanded of him, after his resurrection, to declare to all men, that *God had ordained him to be the judge of quick and dead*. Of these things he declares *God had chosen him for a witness*, and therefore he relates them to *Cornelius* as the proper foundation of his faith. And when he adds, *To him gave all the prophets witness*, he did it, not for the sake of *Cornelius*, who needed not the testimony of the prophets to know that he was accepted of *God*; but for the sake of those of the circumcision who came with *Peter*, and who were surprised that the gospel should be preached to the *Gentiles*, and even astonished when they saw the gifts of the *Holy Ghost* poured out on them. See *verses 43, &c.*

So that these passages, which our author cites to prove that the apostles reasoned out of the *Old Testament* with *Gentiles*, in order to convert them, are very falsely alledged ; and I believe I may safely affirm, that no one single instance of this nature can be produced out of the whole *New Testament*, notwithstanding his confident assertion to the contrary. The different circumstances of *Jews* and *Gentiles* made it necessary, that very different methods should be taken in order to convince them of the truth of *christianity*. *Jews* were to be argued with as *Jews*, i. e. as persons enjoying a former revelation from God ; and it was necessary to convince them, that the character of *Christ*, and the whole scheme of *christianity*, were agreeable to the plain design, and predictions of that revelation. But what would it have signified, if St. *Paul* at *Athens*, in a congregation of heathen Philosophers, had reasoned out of *Jeremiah* and *Habakkuck*, and other jewish writers ? Such names would have procured him contempt, instead of having gained him converts : And therefore

fore we find him arguing from quite different topicks; shewing the folly and unreasonableness of Idolatry, from the nature and perfections of God, and exhorting men to righteousness and virtue, from the consideration of a future judgment by *Jesus Christ, of which God hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* See *Acts xvii. 31.* and also *Acts xiv. 15. &c.* with many other instances that might be mentioned.

Indeed the whole argument from prophecies hath been intirely mistaken, or misrepresented by our author. He banterers and insults the apostles, for pretending to prove particular events by preceding prophecies, which he thinks did not belong to them; for instance, that *Christ was born of a virgin,* because *Isaiah says, Behold a virgin shall conceive &c.* And *that he went into Ægypt,* because *Hosea says, Out of Ægypt have I called my son.* Whereas the ridicule falls entirely on himself, because the apostles never pretend to prove events by prophecies; but after having solidly proved the facts they speak of, which as to

to their evidence are intirely independent of prophecies, shew their agreement with those prophecies. So that if these prophecies did not originally refer to these facts, yet still the facts remain, and are proved by undeniable evidence. The writings of the jewish prophets could never prove the truth of events that never happened ; and if these things did actually come to pass, they will prove all that we want to be proved, whither ever the jewish scriptures spoke of them or not. And what if some of those prophecies did not originally refer to the things, to which they are applied by the *New Testament* writers, will it follow that there are no other events agreeable to plain and literal predictions ? Or that if all the grand characters of the *Messiah* are to be found in *Christ*, that therefore he cannot be the *Messiah*, because some passages are applied to him, that we cannot prove did originally belong to him ? These are inferences no one would ever have thought of, but persons of our authors great intelligence and sagacity.

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Upon the whole then as the apostles did certainly prove, that the sufferings and resurrection of *Christ*, and the preaching the gospel to the *Gentiles*, were agreeable to the ancient prophecies of the *Old Testament*, taken in their *literal sense*; so 'tis reasonable to think, that when ever they applied other passages to him, they were such as by the *Jews* themselves were usually applied to the *Messiah*. And therefore tho' no absolute proof can be drawn from such passages for the truth of *christianity*, so neither will the citing them yield any just ground of exception against it; and tho' such sort of proofs would have been of no avail with *Gentiles*, with whom they were never made use of, yet were they necessary to satisfy the *Jews*, and were therefore justly insisted on by the apostles. To take the advantage of an adversaries concession hath never yet been thought an unfair way of disputing; and it seems to me to have been particularly necessary in the case of the apostles, because 'tis very probable, that if they had omitted to take notice of the agreement

greement between such passages and our Saviours character, the *Jews* would have objected against his being the *Messiah*, upon account of his not having such predictions fulfilled in him. And even upon the supposition that many of these passages were not originally intended to refer to the *Messiah*, yet as they had been applied to him in our Saviours time, it seems an instance of the wisdom and care of providence, so to order the circumstances of our Saviour's life, as that even these supposed prophecies should appear to have been verified in him ; agreeably to the constant method of Gods dealing with men, to have pity on their infirmities, and to accommodate the dispensations of his providences to their weaknesses and prejudices, as far as is consistent with his perfections. If the modern *Jews* have other notions of some of these passages than their forefathers had, this will prove indeed, that the application of them to *Christ* is not the proper method to convince them of the truth of *christianity* ; but it will not, prove that they were improperly urged by
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the apostles to the *Jews* of their own time, who had different apprehensions of them, and can therefore be no just ground for the treating *christianity* with insolence and contempt. Unless the modern *Jews* sacrifice all their hopes of the *Messiah* to their prejudices, they must necessarily allow that some passages of the *Old Testament* speak of him, and relate to the times of his coming; because they can have no other reasonable foundation for such hopes, but what they have in the writings of their prophets. Now probably even these passages may not be without their difficulties; and the *Jews* some years hence may think there is as little reason for applying them to the *Messiah*, as the modern *Jews* think there was for applying some of those to *Jesus Christ*, which were interpreted of him by the apostles; and therefore as they would not think it unfair in a christian to dispute with them for the truth of *christianity*, from prophecies acknowledged by themselves to refer to the *Messiah*, so neither are the apostles to be blamed for arguing on the same foundation

dation with the *Jews* of their own time. But what is there in all this to prove that *christianity* is founded on the *allegorical*, i. e. the *false sense* of scripture? Because the apostles sometimes prudently endeavoured to prevent the ill effects of particular prejudices, doth it therefore follow that they never used any solid arguments at all? Or because the *Jews*, in our Saviours time, applied some things to the *Messiah*, which might not originally refer to him, is it a certain consequence that therefore there are no prophecies in the *Old Testament* relating to him? Or that because some passages being only supposed prophecies, are proofs only to them who believe them prophecies, that therefore the literal accomplishment of real prophecies is not to be esteemed a proper proof? It may safely be allowed, without prejudice to *christianity*, that the apostles did sometimes quote scripture according to the general interpretation of those they wrote to; not indeed as real proofs in themselves; but because it would be a satisfaction to those they were concerned with, to see some cir-

cumstance in the life of *Christ*, answering to such a supposed prophecy of the *Messiah*. But it doth not therefore follow that they either thought such quotations *real proofs* themselves ; much less that they used them as the *only proofs*, or with those who did not know any thing of them, or did not believe them real proofs. Since therefore p. 83. *christianity* is not founded on *allegorical interpretations* of scripture, given by *Christ* and his apostles, this ought not to be any obstacle or stumbling block in the way of the conversion of the *Jews* to *christianity* ; and our author hath shewn himself, either a very ignorant or dishonest man, in representing the religion of the gospel as founded solely on allegory, when he cannot produce one single allegory alledged as a proper and conclusive proof by *Christ*, or any of his apostles.

What he mentions p. 83. in opposition to what I have been asserting, viz. how much *allegory* was in use amongst the Pagans, being cultivated by many of the philosophers themselves,

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as well as theologers; by some as the method of delivering doctrines; but by most as the method of explaining away absurdities; is indeed a very disingenuous and unmannerly comparison of *paganism* and *christianity*, but hath not the least shadow or appearance of argument in it. If *christianity* can be proved to be clogged with any absurdities, or to have no better reasons to support it, than the *pagan* religion had, I will readily own we have need enough of allegories to defend it; tho' I should have but a mean opinion of a religion that needed so weak and wretched a defence. But till this be done, to insinuate that *christianity* hath no other support than allegory, and that both the religion of the gospel, and the proof of it are upon a level with the superstitions of *paganism*, that covered over the most monstrous impieties and absurdities with allegory; is such an instance of immorality in this author, as he must I think upon reflection greatly condemn himself for. If he can find out any christians that take their *christianity* from *Origen*, *Austin*, or any other

of the fathers he quotes ; or that reck-on them proper judges of the sense of scripture, and in matters of faith, I leave them to his correction ; and do not begrudge them the honour of reconciling the passages he cites, and others he might have quoted, with reason and scripture : Tho' methinks he ought to be mercifull in his censures, when he remembers the many blunders, wilfull misrepresentations, false construings of plain latine, and the like, which the author of a late *discourse of freethinking*, who cannot I suppose be unknown to him, was proved to be guilty of. And as for the author I have been arguing with, he hath made so many unjust applications, false quotations, and the like, as I fear argue, not so much weaknes of understanding, as a wicked and perverse disposition of mind. And from the many base methods made use of to undermine the christian religion by some, and the many impertinences and false-methods of reasoning made use of to support it by others, I cannot help observing, that as *christianity*, owed its first spreading, not to humane art and

and wisdom ; so the after support of it must be attributed, not to the conduct and skill of its professors and advocates, but to the power and providence of almighty God.

I have only one thing more to mention on this head, which is what our author asserts p. 19. &c, viz. That christianity is wholly revealed in the Old Testament, not literally; but mystically, and that therefore christianity is mystical Judaism; and that therefore the apostles used allegories, not as arguments ad hominem, but as proper and the only proofs of their allegorical religion. This put into plain english is, that christianity is nothing but an heap of absurdities, contradictions, and false and idle interpretations of the jewish writings; and that Christ and his apostles made use of forced idle ridiculous interpretations of scripture to support it. Every one that considers this author's plain meaning in the words *allegorical* and *mystical*, must allow that I have not misrepresented him. Sure I am for his own sake, he should not have made so bitter and so unjust

a reflection as this. If he hath the cause he writes for at heart, this way can never be thought by any wise man a proper method to support it ; and therefore, with all his pomp of citations, he ought hereafter evermore to be looked on as a wretched advocate for infidelity, who hath no better methods to defend it than by slandering and reviling *christianity*. To calumniate and scoff at is not to argue ; but certainly proves that he, who makes use of this method, hath either a very bad cause to defend, or hath neither sense nor honesty to defend a good one. Which part of the character suits our author best, I leave his own conscience and the world to judge of. That there were many predictions in the *Old Testament* of things to happen under the times of the *Messiah*, I have already shewn ; I mean things *literally*, not *allegorically* spoken of; and therefore it will follow, not that *christianity* is the *allegorical sense of the Old Testament*, but that there are many things in *Christianity* agreeable to the plain predictions of the *Old Testament*; and that the shewing the correspondence between the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, and

and their completion under the *New*, is a very proper method of arguing with those who allow the authority of the *Old Testament*; and that such arguments and proofs will be to them convincing, and a proper foundation for their faith. But what have *Gentiles*, men that knew nothing of the *jewiſh* religion, or writings, to do with *jewiſh* prophecies; especially with the mystical, *i. e.* the false sense of these prophecies? And where will *this wiſe man*, *this disputer* bring any one instance to prove, that the apostles ever preached up *judaism*, in order to convert a *Gentile* to *christianity*? Or doth he so little understand the writings of the *Old* and *New Testament*, as not to know the vast difference between the two religions they contain. *Christianity* in all its main principles and duties hath no manner of relation to, or connection with the *jewiſh* religion; and those who have never seen the writings of the prophets may form as just a scheme of the religion of the gospel, as those that are ever so thoroughly acquainted with them; and of consequence a person may be a sincere be-

liever in *Jesus Christ*, that hath never heard of *Moses* and the prophets. And this seems to have been the case with the first *Gentiles* that were converted to *christianity*. The apostles staid but for a very little while in many places where they preached the gospel, and therefore inculcated only the more necessary truths that were to be believed; such as that *Jesus* was the son of God, that he died for the sins of men, and rose again for their justification; and all who professed their belief of these things were baptised without exception, without any the least intimation of the necessity of their understanding *judaism*, or attempt to convert them by *jewish allegories*, as may be seen in *the acts of the apostles*. Yea farther it seems to have been one principal end of St. *Paul's* writing his epistles, to keep the *gentile* converts from too high an esteem and veneration for *judaism*, and to perswade them not to meddle with *jewish* disputes and questions, nor to conform to any of their rites and ceremonies; from the typical, mystical sense of which he was

so far from pretending to argue, as that he condemns them as weak and beggerly elements, and calls them shadows only in comparison of the more excellent duties of *christianity*. And indeed as there is not one single instance to be produced, where any of the apostles lay any stress on, or pretend to argue from allegory, or to convince men of the truth of *christianity* by persuading them, first, to turn mystical *Jews*; I leave this gentleman to his own conscience, to examine whether he can justify so apparently false and scandalous a charge on *christianity*, by any of the principles of justice or honour; and heartily pray God that he may be at last prevailed with to examine the evidence for the truth of it, with a mind free from partiality and prejudice, that *the things of his peace may not be finally hid from him.*



C H A P. XIII.

The CONCLUSION.

 N D thus have I endeavoured to give some account of the nature of the *Old Testament* prophecies, and the reasons of their citation in the *Newe*. But before I quite dismiss our anthor, 'tis necessary I should add, that supposing the difficulties which attend the quotations out of the *Old Testament*, by the apostles, were much greater than they really are, yet even this would not affect the credit, or the truth of *christianity*. Had this been the only sort of proof that the first preachers of the gospel insisted on, he would have written much more to the purpose than I apprehend he now hath done; and then
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the proper way of converting men to the faith of the gospel would have been, first to have convinced them of the truth and authority of the *jewish* revelation. But this is a supposition contrary to the certain practice of the apostles, as far as we have any account of them in the *Acts*; they never pretending to argue with *Gentiles* from *jewish* prophecies, but plain facts; nor nor with the *Jews* themselves from prophecies alone, but from prophecies and facts together; because 'twas necessary, with respect to them, that *Jesus Christ* should be proved both *a real prophet*, and *that particular prophet*, or *Messiah*, whom they expected. As indeed, after the conversion of the *Gentiles* to the faith of *Christ*, the churches were a mixed society of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it is no wonder that in epistles written for the general benefit, there should be a mixture of each kind of argument; especially since one main subject of almost all the epistles, that are now extant, was a *jewish* question, viz. how long, and over whom the *jewish* ceremonial law was to be in

in force. The application of *jewish* scripture, on such an occasion, to *Jews* was exceeding proper, and was sure to have its influence and weight. But that on other occasions, when the apostles were preaching the gospel to *Gentiles* only, they mentioned the *jewish* scriptures or religion, there is not one passage in the whole *New Testament* to render it probable.

Suppose then that there are some passages cited by the *New Testament* writers, that we cannot well account for, or others that we certainly know are applied to occasions they did not originally refer to, what will follow? The subversion of *christianity*, and the imposture of *Christ* and his apostles? This our author hath been endeavouring to prove, in his way; but, thanks be to God, without effect. The consequence will be this, that as to such, which we cannot demonstrate to be applied contrary to their original intention, and yet which we know not well how to account for, they must remain in their present uncertainty; and as no argument can be drawn from them,

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to support the religion of the gospel, so neither will they furnish any reasonable objection against it. And as to those passages which do evidently appear to be applied to different occasions than what they originally refer to, if any such there be, it will be sufficient to say of them, that the apostles, who did thus apply them, had sufficient reason to do it ; that there were particular circumstances that made such quotations necessary, and that those, for whose use they were made, understood the justness and propriety of them : Or that we understand not the precise meaning of the forms of the citations, nor the purposes for which scripture was then usually cited, nor the interpretation that was usually put upon the passages that are most liable to exception. Now I apprehend that, before our author and his friends will be able to do *christianity* any great disservice, they must make it out, that there could be no circumstances relating to persons, times, or places, that could make such an application of scripture proper ; and they must fix the exact meaning of those expressions,

pressions, *This was done that it might be fulfilled, Then was the scripture fulfilled, &c.* as they were then in use amongst the *Jews*; and when it can be proved that the apostles used these forms of quotation in a different sense from what others did, or put another interpretation on the *Old Testament* prophecies than the true, or generally received one; I know not but we may then have some reason to be in pain for them, tho' even this will not undermine the truth of *christianity*. For the truth and certainty of this depends, not solely upon the supposition of their being inspired, much less under the influence of a continual inspiration; but upon the truth of the gospel history, *viz.* the life and death, and resurrection of our blessed Lord. If there be any solid proof of this, *christianity* will maintain its ground, and stand firm against all the attacks of infidelity; even tho' it could be proved, that the writings of the apostles, which are now extant, were not all penned under divine inspiration. If it can be proved that there was such a person as

Jesus

Jesus Christ, and that the doctrines and precepts, delivered in the gospels, were taught by him, and the miracles there recorded actually performed by him; that nevertheless he was maliciously put to death by the *Jews*, but raised again from the dead the third day, according to what he himself foretold; and that after a wonderful ascension into heaven, he sent down his holy spirit on his apostles, according to his promise; it will then undeniably follow, that he was a prophet sent of God, and that the religion he taught is of divine obligation. Now tho' the being under the peculiar direction of the spirit of God would be a very great advantage to persons giving this testimony, and is what I apprehend to be the real case of the apostles, yet is not this necessary, in the nature of the thing, to render their testimony credible. For upon the supposition that they were persons of probity and honour, and actually saw and heard the things of which they speak, they were then proper witnesses, and their testimony ought to be received. And this is what

what the *New Testament* writers themselves appeal to. Thus *Luke*, in the beginning of his gospel, tells us, that he had a perfect understanding of the things believed amongst christians, as being delivered unto him by those, who, from the beginning, were eye witnesses and ministers of the word, *Luke* i. 2, 3. And St. *John* declares, That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, *John* i. 3. And the apostles, *Peter* and *John*, answering before the counsel of *Jerusalem*, tell them, We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard, *Acts* iv. 20. So that the apostles do not found their claim of being believed, upon the foot of inspiration only, but upon their having been witnesses to the things of which they write. As they delivered nothing but what they saw and heard, so far their testimony was to be received and submitted to. And 'till our author, and his friends, can disprove the accounts they have given, they will never be able to disprove the truth of *christianity*.

There is not indeed, as I apprehend, any cause to make so large an allowance as this to the objectors against *christianity*. Let those, who deny the inspiration of the apostles, prove the falsity of that account we have in the *Acts*, of the descent of the *Holy Ghost* upon their heads, and of the wonderful works they declared they wrought by the power of the same spirit. Let them shew us for what reasons they immediately changed their notions of the nature of the *Messiah's* kingdom, and what could reasonably be supposed to induce them to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for the sake of *Christ*, who had hitherto entertained very strong expectations of high advancement in worldly honour and dignity. Let them farther tell us how the apostles were supported, and by what they were governed at their first preaching *christianity*. What was it that inspired these poor fishermen with such mighty courage before the face of the rulers, and chiefs of the people? Whence did they learn the arts of apologizing in

so just a manner, and upon every emergence, before their enemies? How came their discourses so coherent, their entire scheme so consistent, and all their remaining epistles so very agreeing with each other, if they were either weak or dishonest men, or were not under the influence of some good spirit to direct them? These are such difficulties in the deistical scheme, as seem to me vastly to exceed any that can be pretended to follow the *christian*. And I profess I can as easily believe the grossest contradiction in nature, as to perswade myself to think, that eleven or twelve poor mean illiterate *Jews*, fishermen and publicans by occupation, hated by their own nation, and persecuted by others, could ever invent so artful a story as that of the life, and death, and resurrection of *Christ*, and then propagate the cheat in spite of all persecutions, and disperse themselves into so many nations, and teach one uniform consistent scheme, and write so many epistles at such different times and places, agreeing in all the main doctrines, precepts, advices,

advices, motives, and the like, and at last bring the whole world into their scheme. These are such romantick suppositions as will not easily gain credit with any reasonable considerate men. The conduct of the apostles is indeed easily accountable for, upon the supposition of the truth of their doctrine, and their being under a divine assistance and influence. But he who denies this, must, if he would act the part of a reasonable man, disprove the truth of the gospel history, and tell us upon what other views and principles the apostles acted, that could be supposed, either to inspire them with courage sufficient to prosecute their design, or with wisdom to render them successfull in it. Till this be done, it will signify but little to start particular difficulties in the sacred writings, or to intimate the uncertainty of our canon, or the differences of learned men in explaining it. These things may cause men of weak and unstable minds to desert the truth ; but I am perswaded can never be sufficient to outweigh

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weigh the many arguments that prove, That JESUS CHRIST is the KING of *Israel*, and SAVIOUR of the world.

F I N I S.







